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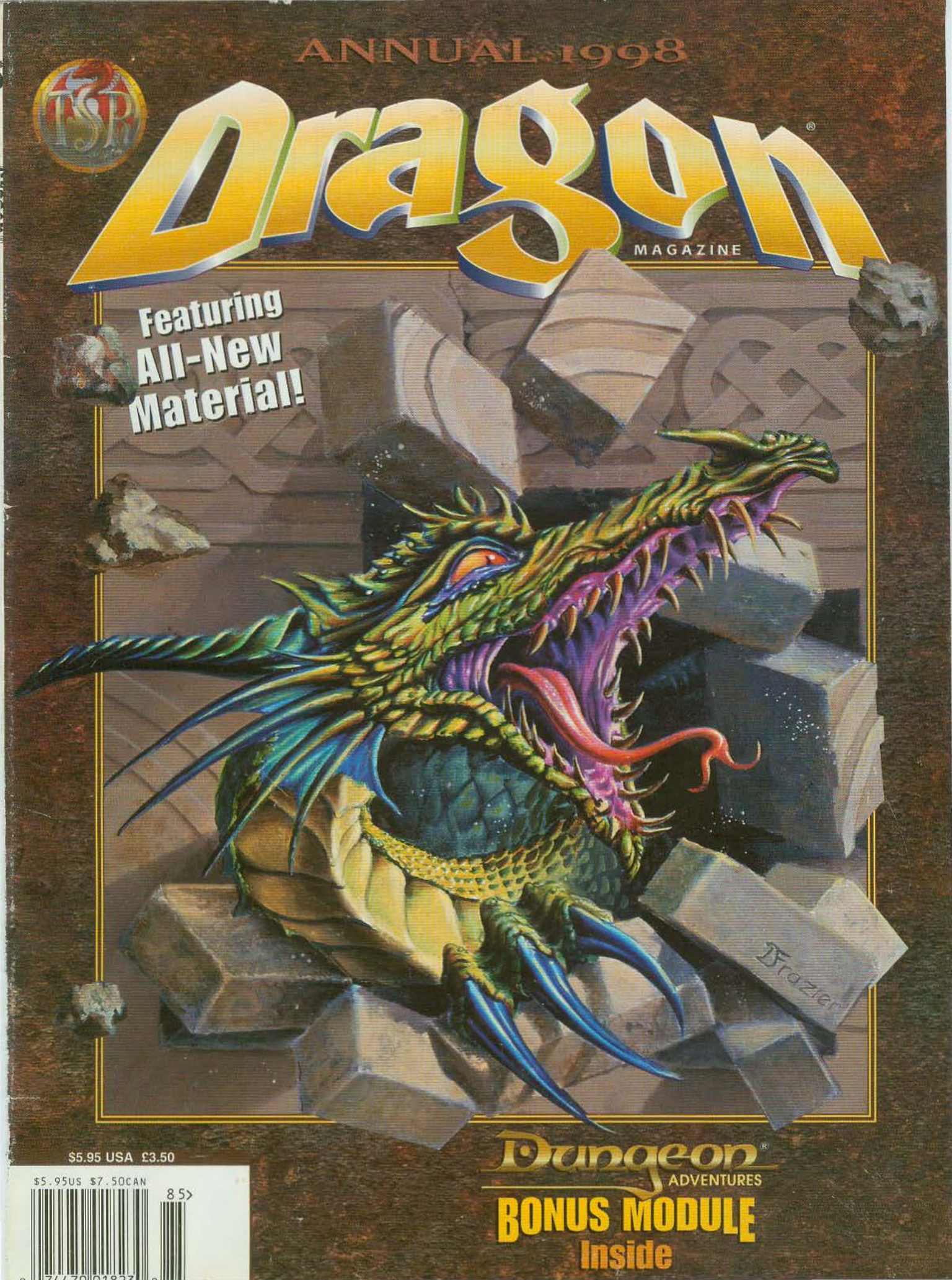

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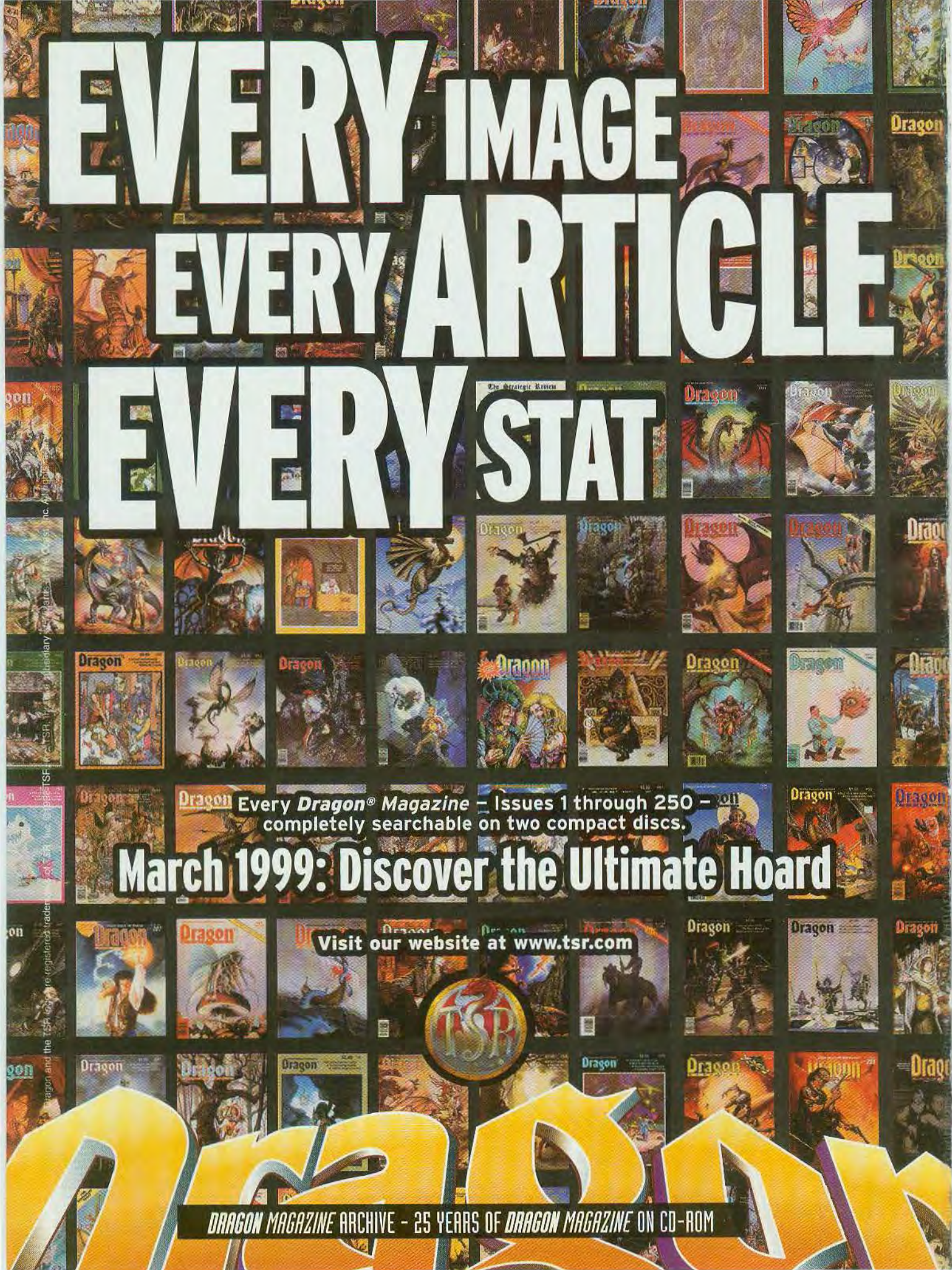
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R. A. SALVATORE

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Brazier

Dragon®

Volume XXIII, No. 13 Annual 1998

Annual 1998

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On the Cover

Dan Frazier's "Blockbuster" dragon captures the spirit of this year's annual–a real blockbuster as well!

The Wyrm's Turn™

Save Us a Place

Somehow, three Annuals seem to mark a much longer passage of time than a few dozen regular issues. It doesn't feel like three years since someone talked us into adding a thirteenth issue to our already crushing schedule. Perhaps the time has sped so quickly because so much has changed since then, at least on the surface. Despite becoming part of Wizards of the Coast, moving to the Seattle area, and constantly tweaking the look and contents of the magazine to find the perfect mix, we're keeping the same mission we've had for the past three years: We want a spot at your game table.

With that goal in mind, we hope there's something for everyone in this issue. AD&D® game players come first, and so we've filled the usual departments with crunchy bits designed to fit into nearly any AD&D campaign. In particular, check out Jay Knioum's remarkable "Ecology of the Steel Dragon." Also, even if you're a veteran player, try Lloyd Brown's "Dungeon Mastery" article to learn how your game can benefit from a campaign journal.

This year's features cover the gamut of TSR games and the most popular AD&D (and SAGA®) game settings. We start with a look back at the past few years and a glimpse forward to 1999, as Ed Greenwood presents a summary of *all* of the Wyrms of the North and shows us exactly where their domains lie. As you can see from the table of contents, we've crammed this issue full of features for the GREYHAWK®, RAVENLOFT®, PLANESCAPE®, and DRAGONLANCE® campaigns, too.

One of the few TSR games I got to play (rather than GM) was the classic STAR FRONTIERS® game. Thus, I've always had a soft spot for that particular setting, and it's a delight to see it return, this time in the ALTERNITY® game, with Steve Bartell's "Alternate Frontiers" article. Likewise, Mike Selinker's "Marvel Super Science" article brings back fond memories of the comic books and the original MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game. This year has been a great one for new TSR games, a perfect time to return to old campaigns or to start new ones, as the boys and I are doing this weekend.

No Annual can be complete without a contribution from our sister publication, *DUNGEON® Adventures*. Chris has been too busy to contribute this year's adventure, but he turned over an excellent substitute. Ron Poirier gives us "Handle With Care," a wonderful campaign-starter. If you know—or started—a group that recently learned the D&D® Fast-Play Rules, this would be a perfect "next adventure."

Once you've finished the issue, tell us what you end up using in your campaign. We'll bring you more of what you like best throughout the coming year and, of course, once again with the 1999 Annual.

All we ask is that you save us a place at that gaming table!

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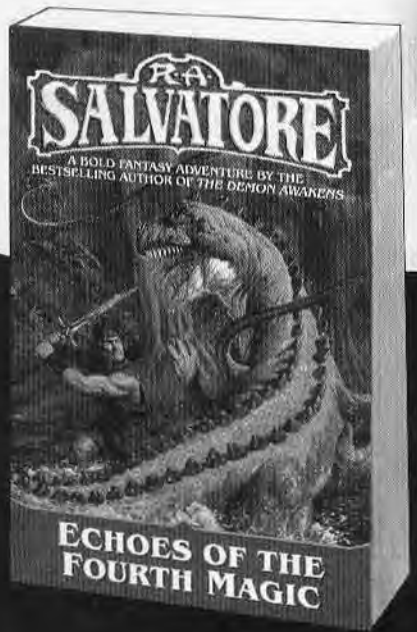
fan•ta•sy *n.* 1. imagination, esp. when extravagant and unrestrained. 2. an ingenious or fanciful thought or creation. 3. ECHOES OF THE FOURTH MAGIC by R. A. Salvatore, *New York Times*–bestselling author of *The Demon Awakens.*

"The creature came slowly, deliberately, confident of the inability of its prey to escape. Without causing even a ripple...a head appeared out of the dark water, a great lizard head with a forked tongue flicking between long, pointed teeth....

"The lizard monster rose from the fen and reared up on its hind legs, lean and sinewy and very tall—even twenty feet away it towered over the men. It almost seemed to grin down at them, sizing up its dinner and swaying slowly, hypnotically, back and forth. Two tentacles, twin serpents they seemed, protruded sideways from its shoulders, hanging down its sides all the way to disappear into the dark water.

"'Good God,' muttered Del, and he drew his sword, preparing to meet his doom."



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R.A. SALVATORE

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Volo is justly proud of his efforts in assembling lore on dragons who currently flourish in the Sword Coast North, so he has prepared this wyrm-by-wyrm summary of their nameless dominions and attitudes toward intruders (for sale as a pamphlet to interested adventurers throughout the North).

Examinations of each dragon appear in the pages of *Dragon Magazine* as installments of the Wyrms of the North column.

By Dragons Ruled & Divided

The Draconic Domains of the Sword Coast North

by Ed Greenwood

The notorious mage Elminster edited much of Volo's draconic work, but he opposes the idea of "a bloodthirsty adventurer's guide to dragons" and has refused to correct errors and omissions herein—save to warn readers that he can call to mind almost forty dragons active in the area who are missing from this survey. In other words, don't think that dragon's territories are quite so tidy as the map shows ... or that these wyrms are the only draconic dangers awaiting a traveler.

Arauthator
(Old White Death)

From his lair in the Lonefang, this old male white dragon tirelessly patrols a domain that stretches from the Cold Run east to Mount Gaumarath (northernmost peak of the Ice Mountains) along the Spine of the World, with an unknown northern boundary and a "bump" extending southeast from The Fell Pass in a great arc to take in all the land north of Mithril Hall and the Citadel of Many Arrows (the headwaters of the River Surbrin). Arauthator never hunts in the Moonwood, the Coldwood, or Icewind Dale, but he seeks to slay any dragon who encroaches on his dominion. He delights in battle but is far more patient than most dragons. He spends much of his time scouring out tunnels beneath the Endless Ice Sea, gleefully devouring the remorhaz he finds there.

To Arauthator, all cold-dwelling creatures are prey to be devoured. Dragons and other formidable foes are rivals to be destroyed or driven away. If that means letting them explore the domain or lair unchallenged for a time, so be it. Only Arveiaturace is acceptable as a mate, and she is always escorted out of the domain when her pregnancy is achieved. Human and demihuman explorers, prospectors, and adventurers are the worst invading perils but might be misdirected into wild goose chases or into attacking other nearby wyrms. Avalanches are useful weapons against all foes.

If prospectors find ore, Arauthator immediately leaves them unmolested and tries not to show himself in the sky nearby; mining communities mean sledge- or wagon-trains of ore pulled by dragon meals, and humans always bring livestock. If a dragon obligingly devours the stock, the miners must bring more, starve in the worst winter months, or leave (and on the journey out, unwittingly offer themselves as meals).

Arveiaturace
(Iceclaws, The White Worm)

From her lair in the Icepeaks, this venerable female white dragon holds sway over a territory that stretches over the Trackless Sea from Tuern and the Sea of Moving Ice south to the shores of Lantan, bounded on the east by the headlands of the Sword Coast from Tethyr north to Mount Sar, and on the west by an invisible line running parallel to the Sword Coast that begins as far west as one can fly and still see Tuern, and runs well east of Gundarlun, Mintarn, and the Moonshaes. Arveiaturace sometimes hunts into the Crags and northern Neverwinter Wood, but other dragons (notably Claugiyliamatar) dispute her right to this region.

A loner except when she (rarely) mates with Arauthator and rears his progeny, Arveiaturace is intelligent, sensitive, suspicious, and always vigilant. She regards humans—particularly those aboard ships—as her food, and she loves plunging into wild battle-lust when fighting creatures who fly into her air over the Sea of Swords. On the other hand, her loneliness often drives her to spare those who talk with her. She respects and is respected by Laeral, the Lady Mage of Waterdeep, and the shipwright Old Aldon of Mintarn. She seeks a powerful wizard she can trust to be her companion and rider.

Arveiaturace is not above filling the ears of a conversationalist she's decided to spare with tales of "The Lost Treasure Isle of the Nine Wizards" (which most sages agree is wholly her invention): an island somewhere between the Moonshaes and Evermeet that rises from time to time, displaying the drowned towers of the wizards—crammed with their magic items, gems, and gold—for a season or so before sinking once more. Of course, according to Arveiaturace, it's always just surfaced—just the thing for ship after ship of greedy Amnians, Nelanther pirates, and bold Baldurians to come seeking. Ship after ship of meals for a sea-roving white worm.

illustrated by Stephen Daniele
map by Linda Kekumu

Balagos

(Bahor, Dragonbane, The Flying Flame, The Dragon King)

This male red great wyrm's domain stretches from the southern edge of the Wood of Sharp Teeth to the Giant's Run Mountains and from the south bank of the upper River Chionthar (nigh Iriaebor) to the River Ith. The entire Forest of Tethir and fringes of this dominion are claimed by other dragons, but the Flying Flame has a rather casual attitude toward draconic dominion that other dragons have learned to accept. (Most hide when they see him, or keep to their lairs and ignore his passage.) Balagos considers all Faerûn his; other wyrms are merely custodians of areas within it, holding their positions and lives at his pleasure. Betimes he slays a random dragon to keep others in fear, then flies over half of Faerûn in slow triumph with his victim's corpse dangling from his jaws for all to see.

A megalomaniac, Balagos is a fearless, ruthless foe who delights in slaughtering adventurers, wizards, and dragons alike. He possesses three outstanding talents: he never forgets the appearance, name, or manner of any encountered being; he's a shrewd judge of character; and he considers consequences and likely outcomes. No foe is to be underestimated, but no being is worthy of his friendship, love, or to remain in any place (or in possession of any property) the Flying Flame desires for himself. He loves to take spectacular and public revenge on all who defy or withstand him.

For the last two summers, Balagos has been smoldering over his inability to find and slay a band of Harpers who plundered a cache of magic only months after he'd established it. Worse, word of their endeavor has spread among Harpers, and everywhere the dragon flies he hears the taunting tune played by a "singing sword" that was among the loot stolen from him; some Harpers who've never seen the sword, but who've had its tune played to them, employ minor spells to make its melody when they see Balagos. At first, the dragon's rage lured him into a variety of traps—but now he snarls and waits, cursing Harpers and devising ways to bring about the deaths of all who harp.

Claugiyliamatar

(Old Gnawbone)

From her lair in Deeping Cave, this venerable female green dragon commands a domain stretching down the Sword Coast from the south bank of the River Mirar to the north bank of the Dessarin. Almost all of this territory is claimed by other dragons, but Claugiyliamatar cares not. She seldom leaves her lair, preferring to scheme and watch the world through scrying-crystals, employing dozens of humans and halflings to carry out her will. She abandons her idleness, however, to defend her territory against intruding dragons. She enjoys devouring adventurers and entire caravans.

Cunning, paranoid, and utterly cruel, Claugiyliamatar dwells alone, driving away male green dragons who come courting. Through her agents, she enjoys manipulating affairs in Neverwinter and Waterdeep. Most of Old Gnawbone's earnings are invested so as to stir up rivalries and strengthen organizations she controls to create more trouble and squeeze profits anew.

Claugiyliamatar is fascinated by human and elven women who wield power, and she spends hours scrying them. She's also interested in magic, especially items enabling her to take on human form and retain her draconic powers. She hungers to participate in the bustle and intrigue of city life, from knifings in alleyways to passionate courting and drinking. As her own spells are too feeble to win her human shape, she spies on nobles and mages to learn who has magic and where they keep it hidden, so as to send her agents forth to steal it. She has no interest in the company of other dragons, and she values other beings only as tools.

Her most recent tool is The Blood-Red Crown, a dozen bored and jaded young noble ladies of Waterdeep who formed their own adventuring band to feel both excited and important. They carry trifling magics, but Claugiyliamatar has been covertly directing them to tombs and ruins in or near Neverwinter and Waterdeep. The ladies of the Crown have turned up only magic too minor to be worth relieving them of, thus far, but Old Gnawbone is awaiting the day when they find something really useful—and she can send in agents to seize it.

Daurgothoth

(The Creeping Doom)

From his lair in Dolblunde, this dracolich (in life, a male black great wyrm) spies on a territory bounded by the coast from the mouth of the Dessarin to Mount Sar, east to Amphail and Bargewright Inn, and thence down the Dessarin to the sea once more. Daurgothoth concentrates on road traffic in his scrying. He is interested in all things magical and news of dragon activity. To escape detection by prying mages and adventurers, he seldom acts openly.

Daurgothoth is obsessed with two goals: gaining abilities of other dragon breeds to become the supreme dragon, and "coming back to life" sufficiently to sire his own new dragon species. He continually strives to improve his spells and find a suitable mate—or construct one, much as he was modified in undeath to gain a tail sting and various breath weapons.

He'll energetically slaughter any being who discovers his endeavors or finds his lair, including bands of adventurers working for him whom he judges have begun to learn too much about him. Daurgothoth uses *projected image* spells to speak with underlings while posing as a deliberately mysterious human mage, directing them in shady dealings in Waterdeep, Baldur's Gate, Neverwinter, and Secomber. His initial bold acquisitions of magic alarmed mages and authorities, so he's taken to working through a web of unwitting thieves and unscrupulous merchants. Daurgothoth is a brilliant crafter of magic, endlessly inquisitive, and a miss-nothing observer with an impressive memory. He is paranoid, patient, and calm, and he can't be goaded or blinded by pride.

From time to time, he feels the need for companionship and music, so he seeks out traveling bards, seldom offering them violence or revealing his true nature. Fearing capture by the Cult of the Dragon, he strikes at its agents whenever he can do so without revealing the location of his lair. He recently discovered Claugiyliamatar's pet

adventuring band and intends to use them to trace her—so he can wind up holding the magic of both Crown and green dragon, no matter how much blood it's drenched in.

Deszeldaryndun Silverwing

(The Guardian Worm of Everlund, The Kindly Dragon)

From "Softwing," the lair in the Floating Mountain he shares with the gold dragon Valamaradace, this adult male silver dragon roams a territory determined and patrolled by his consort. Its borders consist of the Moonwood, a line southeast through Dead Orc Pass to Sundabar, thence southwest along the River Rauvin to Turlangtor, and on into the Woods of Turlang as far as the Lost Peaks, thence along the Dessarin to a point south of Flint Rock, and from there due north across the Evermoors to the River Surbrin, and along its banks back to the Moonwood again.

Silverwing is graceful, prudent, good-humored, and helpful to humans and demihumans in need—usually providing healing and shelter, but sometimes assisting them in personal endeavors and goals. He avoids human society and politics but works behind the scenes against trolls, orc hordes, and other evils, preferring to make foes simply vanish. He and his consort dislike the open hunting and spreading of fear practiced by many dragons.

Deszeldaryndun prefers to render aid in disguise, but he won't hesitate to reveal his true powers. A shrewd judge of character, he uses magic covertly to probe alignments and true natures. He prefers a simple life in the wilds and frequent human contact on his own terms, spending much of his time posing as a human woodcutter or—with her permission—as the human sorceress Alustriel—whom he's spent enough time working with that he can portray her flawlessly. Silverwing enjoys conversation with intelligent and sensitive good-aligned humans. He has a natural talent for mimicry, specializing in human and half-elven voices, movements, and mannerisms. He's an accomplished singer and loves gossip, learning secrets, and seeing the overall implications of human activities in the North. Disinterested in (and ignorant of) the doings of other dragons, Deszeldaryndun hates only dracoliches and the Cult of the Dragon, but he investigates all intruders into his shared domain with an eye to keeping it free of oppression and murderous destruction.

Eldenser

(The Worm Who Hides in Blades, The Lurker)

This amethyst male elder wyrm uses magic to leave his withered, wasted, magically preserved body in "secure" hideaways and transfer his sentience into the blade of any tempered, edged metal weapon (from whence he can perceive and employ his magic as if in his own body). In this form, he roams all Faerûn inside swords, considering none of it his territory, but all of it his to freely traverse.

Eldenser ignores other dragons unless they discover him, whereupon he'll cheerfully do battle against attempts to menace or control him or anyone wielding "his" blade. He has little interest in slaying other dragons but dislikes fleeing from them, preferring to best or outwit them. A fan of adventurers (who as blade-carriers can bring him excitement and travel), Eldenser is wary only of mages who want to magically examine the blade he's in—and actively aids and spies on anyone working on magics that might allow a dragon to regenerate or replace an aged, crumbling body.

He currently devotes himself to observing the beauties of Faerûn and the entertaining strivings of its inhabitants (half-elves, humans and elves in particular); trying to influence political events to aid heroes, weaken authority, and generally promote opportunities for entertainment to observe in the future; and following a mysterious process for achieving draconic immortality known as Ossavitor's Way. Eldenser recently learned a spell that enables him (from within a blade, and silently) to briefly animate a nearby nonenchanted bladed weapon smaller than the blade he's in—such as a dagger—and he uses this to slay folk he thinks might suspect his presence and attempt to control him.

Felgolos

(The Flying Misfortune)

This juvenile male bronze dragon roams Faerûn more or less freely, ignoring territories claimed by other creatures—and most beings have learned that it's easiest to ignore his intrusions.(He's clumsy and has a knack of crashing into or unintentionally destroying things, blundering into the midst of delicate or dangerous situations, and generally causing mayhem.) Fighting or trying to entrap him always carries a cost, and Felgolos clearly has no intention of carving out a domain of his own, seizing treasure, or competing for food.

Possessed of sleek build, unshakable curiosity, and unfailing good nature, Felgolos refuses to make enemies or to be prudent and wanders Faerûn intruding everywhere and blithely venturing into great danger. Through years of peering about in perpetual wonderment, Felgolos has led a charmed life; though he's often been hurt and forced to flee, he has survived. Sensitive to the wants and needs of others (once he learns them), he tends to avoid mated dragons he knows are rearing young. News of perils, however, attracts Felgolos rather than deterring him. He's afraid of no creature and views no one as his foe—until they've attacked him. Curiosity as to the doings of others rules him.

Galadaeros

(The Sunset Flame, The Flame Dragon)

From the island of Flamehome (also known as "Galadros" or "the Dragon's Isle"), this mature adult male copper dragon roams the waters in a wide circle that takes in the Purple Rocks, fiercely defending them against encroaching dragons. However, he considers himself exempt from the territorial claims of other dragons, flying wherever he wills. Outside his own domain, his encounters with dragons are as polite, brief, and casual as possible; he offers no menace, ignores it when offered to him, and soon departs.

Galadaeros lairs in a caverns in the highest peak on Flamehome and is said to have three wizshades, or female wild mages, or even some of the Seven Sisters, as servants. He spends his days

acting as the steed, reinforcements, and advisor to the all-female Galadran Company, between twenty and thirty human adventuresses (derisively known as "Sharptongues") whose ranks originally consisted of high-born Waterdhavian ladies. Galadaeros is gentle and good humored, lacking typical draconic pride, and has an uncanny ability to judge the needs and schemes of humans (females in particular). He has few known foes, but the Cult of the Dragon—and adventurers who come to Flamehome intending to carry away treasure or attack the Galadrans—are definitely among them.

Gaulauntyr

(Glorytongue, The Thief Dragon)

This mature adult female topaz dragon lairs on the tiny islet of Alsapir's Rock, just offshore near Mount Sar, and roams the Sword Coast from Baldur's Gate to Luskan, usually near Waterdeep or the outer Moonshaes, but sometimes reaching the Nelanther. Gaulauntyr is solitary and moves about often to avoid other dragons (preferring a life of stealth in and about human cities to slumbering in a lair in the heart of a territory). She finds the City of Splendors increasingly crowded with dragons (and other formidable beings) working undercover and so makes far fewer and more timid forays into it than she once did.

Glorytongue spends her days watching human life on the Sword Coast and devising new ways to steal gems or food. (She loves exotic cheeses.) One of the most intelligent—and paranoid—dragons of the North, she cloaks her true form in illusions and hides whenever possible. An accomplished mimic of human voices, she has a wry and shrewd grasp of human and draconic nature, always having a ready escape route, a scheme to disappear or adopt a disguise, and secondary plans if the first one fails.

Gaulauntyr's nickname comes from her habit of delivering touch spells with her elongated tongue (and the spell she uses to so transform her tongue). Many dragons and others she's robbed seek to recover their losses, but Glorytongue has no strong and persistent foes (the Cult of the Dragon will become such if they ever discover who's behind all of the dragon-hoard thefts). Increasingly, she's taken to robbing exhausted or wounded adventurers who've made camp or gone to sleep in a "secure" stronghold.

Hoondarrh

(The Red Rage of Mintarn, The Red Terror, The Sleeping Wyrm of Skadaurak)

This venerable male red dragon considers coastal islands up and down the Sword Coast his domain but roams Faerûn at will (avoiding magic-strong realms such as Evermeet, Thay, and Halruaa), preferring to hunt in the Shaar or wilderness backlands. Though large and aggressive, Hoondarrh feels his vigor lessening. Increasingly he avoids other dragons, though he remains a fighter of experience and cunning, an increasingly accomplished spellcaster, and commands the formidable magic of the Ongild, an enchanted emerald that lies in his innards.

The folk of Mintarn pay Hoondarrh tribute-money in return for his protection against pirates. He delights in toying with ships south of Mintarn; only his Long Sleeps have kept humans from abandoning water travel in the region. Between slumbers, he entertains himself by watching human doings (mostly in Waterdeep). He rewards those whose pranks, bold deceptions, treacheries, and intrigues amuse him—but he tirelessly hunts down anyone who dares to steal from him. Hoondarrh often plays elaborate deceptions of his own and regards adventurers seeking his hoard or life as entertainment. The recent feud between the Stoneshields dwarven adventuring band and the elven White Flower Venturers was Hoondarrh's doing ... and so were the tales that the lost Spell Throne of Malavarr (a high-backed seat that floats about and enables non-spellcasters seated on it to unleash powerful magics) had been found by a Waterdhavian noble family and hidden in a cellar somewhere in the city for their personal use.

The Red Rage dreams of a mate and offspring—and is becoming increasingly impatient for the achievement of immortality, for he dares not allow himself intimacy until secure in its everlasting protection. He seeks word of wizards working on magics concerned with eternal life or enhanced longevity, and he seizes magical items that might help him win eternal life. In the meantime, he prolongs his natural lifespan by sleeping for decades or centuries at a time.

Iymrith

(The Doom of the Desert, The Dragon of the Statues)

Driven by all-consuming ambition, this female blue wyrm lairs in a nameless ruined city in Anauroch, northeast of Ascore. She slays all intruders and is attended by many gargoyles of her own creation. The gargoyles fly patrols, tunnel the city to keep back the sand, and transport rocks from nearby mountains to expand the "windbreak dune" wall on the windward side of the city. Iymrith also controls a band of adventurers, the Company of the Flame Spider, whom she keeps trapped outside the city, using them to attack intruders.

Iymrith roams the western edge of Anauroch as far south as to be within sight of the Greycloak Hills, as far west as the eastern High Forest, and north to where the Ice Mountains meet the glaciers. She is continually trying to build and animate new bodies for herself, so she can move from body to body and forever cheat death. She will do anything to gain all the magic she can and so rise to supremacy over all Faerûn. Then she can live forever, crafting ever-stronger magics. No one knows if she'll ever feel secure enough to think of mating, dwelling elsewhere, or sharing her magic—but for now she's an enthusiastic menace to all who venture within her reach.

That reach may soon extend much farther than before: Iymrith has just stumbled on a means of opening short-lived (sunset to sunset) gates in distant locations (such as rich cities in Sembia, Amn, and in Waterdeep itself) and is sending raiding parties of gargoyles through them in search of magic. If she perfects a spell she's working on that will allow her to temporarily inhabit a gargoyle body and suffer no harm if it's destroyed, the Doom of the Desert (with spells at the ready) may soon join such forays—and begin her grand plan of looting every mage's tower in Toril.

Jalanvaloss
(The Wyrm of Many Spells)

A mature adult female steel dragon who doesn't defend a territory, Jalanvaloss is happy to share the city of Waterdeep with other dragons who hide in human shape as she does. She tolerates the brief visits of such worms as Galadaeros (keeping herself hidden) but reveals herself to savagely fight off any dragon who dares to attack Waterdhavians, despoil the city ... or do her ill.

Jalanvaloss is a keen observer, never forgetting the smallest details, and seems to revel in being part of as many intrigues and deceptions as possible. She's an actress of the first rank and an adequate mimic, and she enjoys manipulating others and scheming. Over years of residence in Waterdeep (in a succession of assumed female, human guises), she's become expert in recalling the genealogies, relationships, cabals, and alliances of Waterdhavians high and low. She's active in city underlife but also enjoys the entertainment provided by the pretentions and indulgences of its nobles.

Once the steed of the wizard Rythtalies, Jalanvaloss was magically altered by him (in a process lost with his demise) to permanently acquire the ability to operate as a 12th level wizard when in human shape. She's acquired all the spells she can—and is not shy about using them.

Klauth
(Old Snarl)

A huge, scarred old male red dragon, Klauth is known for swift and brutal attacks but has recently retired into brooding paranoia in his lair of "Klauthen Vale" (a narrow, winding valley in the mountains east of Raven Rock) to build his strength, awaiting the day when he'll be powerful enough to emerge as the unquestioned master of dragonkind. Habitually snarling and savage, he's also unpredictable—and may aid stricken creatures (except dragons, whom he drives away or slays on sight) rather than devouring them. Dragon eggs are a favorite meal (save for those of red dragons, which Klauth uses to magically augment his vitality). He's never mated or shown kindness to another dragon.

Klauth leaves his valley on rare forays to smite potential rivals and to search for the hoards of two white dragons he slew. He doesn't defend a domain and considers himself free to roam (but recognizes that sightseeing over Waterdeep or Iymrith's desert city would be dangerous and imprudent). Recent prudence has led him to employ stealth, invade other dragons' domains only for specific reasons, and perform tasks quickly and efficiently. Over the years he's become an expert on creatures of the North and acquired magical means of affixing wands to his wings and firing them as he swoops at foes. He's thought to have bargained information with Alustriel of the Seven to gain a "live and let live" agreement. Like Iymrith, he's experimenting with spells allowing him to transfer his intellect from body to body—in Klauth's case, bodies grown from red dragon eggs (once he masters how to create fully grown dragons without minds of their own, that he can store in magical stasis until he needs them).

Lhammaruntosz
(The Claws of the Coast, Mother Wyrm)

A homely, whimsical, kindly, and inquisitive very old female bronze dragon, Mother Wyrm is famous for owning and operating her own Sword Coast merchant shipping fleet, the Scaly Eye, and for her "swoop from the sky" rescues of shipwrecked humans. Her fleet is over two dozen vessels strong, and she often appears when one is endangered (suggesting she magically farscries their progress). She preys largely on pirates; her depredations have made the Nelanther passable to shipping in recent years. Lhammaruntosz often transfers "fast mail" messages and small items from ship to ship, using "flyover" droplines.

Lacking pride and disinterested in territory, Lhammaruntosz avoids combat whenever possible and never lingers to destroy foes, simply striking to defend herself, end an urgent problem, and be on her way. She carries magical items that can cause deadly midair acidball explosions, and she has vigorous personal regenerative powers that allow her to largely ignore the elements.

Lhammaruntosz doesn't regard her roamings as defining an exclusive domain; she'll ignore or calmly greet and pass other dragons who treat her the same way, fighting only those who offer her battle or attack her friends or Scaly Eye folk or property. She has two lairs, a hidden inland hoard-home and a "resting lair" in the heights of Orlumbor, and she is almost always on Orlumbor or flying along the Sword Coast, visiting coastal agents (and avoiding Waterdeep and Baldur's Gate).

Mother Wyrm recently ordered six large, fast new merchant caravels built for her in Waterdeep; it's rumored she discovered a bay somewhere in the Nelanther where over a dozen sunken ships lie, crammed with pirate treasure.

Malaeragoth
(The Dragon Unseen, The Unseen Dragon)

This very old male sapphire dragon dwells in a vast cavern network beneath the Graypeak Mountains that he calls his Realm of Stone and Shadow. Scrying mirrors drift slowly along its passages, and Malaeragoth uses them often to spy on Faerûn, bending much of his attention on Sembia and the Cult of the Dragon (sometimes posing as a human while using them to seek advice from or manipulate surface-dwellers). Malaeragoth commands legions of skeletons and zombies, but he has no allies and prefers solitude.

Beyond his extensive lair, Malaeragoth claims no territory but considers himself free to travel anywhere. On his rare flying forays, he doesn't hesitate to fight if anyone bars or disputes his way. He watches over approaches to his lair, having developed an intense dislike of surprise guests and visitations. Patient and shrewd, he hates the Cult of the Dragon and has become so expert at manipulating it (through magical guises and unwitting agents) that he's well on the way to controlling it.

Recently, he's hit upon the idea of befriending adventurers (while posing as a human) and aiding them in rising to rule the realms of Faerûn—while magically eavesdropping on their minds. The Unseen Dragon prefers keeping his manipulations hidden over controlling

Sea of Moving Ice
Icewind Dale
The Spine of the World (The Wall)
Mirabar
Valley of Purple Dusk
Luskwood
Citadel Adbar
Ice Mountains
Coldwood
The Icepeak
Luskan
The Great Dale
The Mosswood
Silverymoon
Sundabar
Port Llast
Longsaddle
The Easymoors
The Trollmoors
Eveningwind
Nether Mountains
Gundarlun
Neverwinter Wood
Neverwinter
Neverwinter Road
Yartar
Triboar
The Long Road
Wilfort Keep
The Lost Peaks
The High Forest
The Star Mounts
The Sisters
The Fallen Lands
Trackless Sea
Leilon
Kheptarden
Loses
Westbridge
Mere of Dead Men
Red Larch
Westwood
The Whalebones
Ruathym
Waterdeep
Ardeep Forest
South Wood
Greypeak Mountains
Waterdeep
The Laughing Hollow
Korinn Archipelago
Lizard Marsh
Cradle Way
Lonely Moor
Marsh of Chelimber
Graycloak Hills
The High Moor
The Serpent Hills
Oriumbor
Trollbark Forest
Dragonspear Castle
Evereska
Troll Hills
Hill of Lost Souls
The Forest of Wyrms
The Battle of Bones
Moonshae Isles
Mintarn
Norland
Ceder Callidyrr
Sombar
The Fields of the Dead
Sword Coast
Oman's Isle
Sea of
Eltorel

Map created using *AD&D® Core Rules 2.0.*

his pawns into precisely achieving his own goals—but the extent of his manipulations, and numbers of folk involved as his agents, are staggering.

Miirym
(The Sentinel Wyrm)

All that remains of this former female silver great wyrm is a malevolent, diligent guardian force bound under Candlekeep, as she has been for over fifteen hundred years. In that time, her lair, a pillarlike islet just offshore from Ulgoth's Beard, collapsed into the sea. Miirym once roamed coastal lands between the High Moor and the Sea of Swords (and as far offshore as Mintarn), south to the Cloud Peaks, and north to Mount Helimbrar, but her territory is now as lost as her name and body.

Today Miirym is little more than an all-seeing set of spectral jaws that can bite or unleash any chromatic or metallic breath weapon. Tortured by loneliness, her sanity isn't strong. She craves converse and companionship (and of course, freedom to roam all Faerûn in her own body again), and treachery or sneak attacks upon her evoke savage, furious attacks in return. Trapped in endless guardianship of Candlekeep, Miirym roams a sharply limited "domain" of subterranean passages accompanied only by the occasional monk and by floating, spell-reflecting "glass guardian" spheres. She'll attack all intruders seeking to force their way up into Candlekeep, or anyone bearing any sort of scroll, book, or writing.

Mornauguth
(The Moor Dragon)

A priestess of Shar trapped in dragon shape by rivals, this young adult female green dragon lairs in the Rockshaws, a monster-haunted, trackless region of broken country in the northeastern High Moor. She lairs in extensive caverns beneath Greenleaf Vale (a forested bowl valley) but uses them only when wounded or as shelter from fierce wintry weather, spending most of her time spying on the doings of others or basking on high mountain ledges around Amn, plotting. Mornauguth seems to ignore the very concept of draconic territory, never defending her own lair nor caring if she angers other dragons by her roamings. Only fear of being caught over water curtails her wanderings, which are concerned with the doings of the Sharran clergy, rival priesthoods, and other human intrigues, broken by hunting trips and explorative forays. The only "domain" she'll defend against other dragons are the Sharran temples of Faerûn (Amn in particular).

Subsisting on wild game, adventurers, and caravans, Mornauguth desperately wants her human form back. She prays often to Shar for this boon and gives all the wealth she gains to the Dark Embrace temple in Amn. At least once a month she performs some daring deed (often a raid on a state building, palace, jail, or fortress) in the name of Shar. On rare occasions, clergy of the Dark Embrace request her service as a steed or aid in an attack on a strong target (usually a Selûnite temple), and so far she's given it willingly; how long she'll continue to do so without any reward or sign of Shar's favor remains to be seen.

Nurvureem
(The Drow Dragon, The Dark Lady)

This adult female shadow dragon is actually a drow weredragon. Using illusion spells to appear human, she poses as the Dark Lady of Rundreth Manor, a ruin overlooking the Long Road north of Amphail, and lures men thence. Most she robs, slays, and devours at leisure, but some she seduces and lets go. Freed consorts who speak of the Dark Lady are hunted down and destroyed; those who keep silent and remain friendly are suffered to live. (Nurvureem uses the men who walk away devoted to her to bring her back magical items, potions, and spell scrolls—and to keep her informed of adventurers and Cult of the Dragon agents.) Occasionally she visits one of these "Faithful Few" for companionship and to check on their doings. Those who prove weak or turn against her become coerced allies, fearful servants, or (most often) swiftly dead. Some of them remain her willing servants lifelong. She seems to be seeking longtime friends, and perhaps a suitable mate.

Only human, half-elven, and elven mages customarily impress Nurvureem; she treats such individuals with care until she's measured their power and decided whether she should seduce them, remain hidden, seize their magic while they sleep, or simply attack and win another meal. Rotting dragonflesh is her favorite food, usually gained by devouring adventurer- or weather-weakened dragons. She has no taste for fair and open battles. Wyverns are her next favorite fare, followed by humans.

Nurvureem is lonely, probably less than sane, and unrepentantly evil, openly delighting in theft and cruel pranks. She finds amusement in plots against her—save for those launched by dragons, which arouse her to seething anger—and regards adventurers' strivings as her personal entertainment. She often spies on adventuring bands to enjoy "the show" (and dine on whatever they slay). She despises and destroys dracoliches and members of the Cult of the Dragon on sight but doesn't bother pursuing them. She hates other drow, shuns drow company, ways, and faiths, and is both fascinated by and fearful of other sorts of elves. Elves who treat her arrogantly never fail to enrage her, but she's tasted too many traps to let anger goad her into instant attack.

Nurvureem's "chosen ground" is the Dessarin valley south of Triboar, the lower Delimbiyr as far east as Secomber, and the coastal lands south of that to the Way Inn. She knows every ravine and nameless creek in this territory but does not bother to patrol or defend it as a formal domain.

Nymmurh
(The Wyrm Who Watches, The Guardian of the Silmerhelves)

A kindly male bronze great wyrm now sleepy with age, Nymmurh has devoted much of his life to watching over the Silmerhelve human noble family of Waterdeep. He enchanted several mirrors and portraits in their homes to serve as constant scrying portals he can see, hear, and speak through at will (remaining hidden unless he desires otherwise). These portals entertain Nymmurh as the Silmerhelves live out their lives under his scrutiny. He reveals himself to at least one family member of each generation so as to advise the clan and has become a family legend.

More than once he's covertly arranged matches for Silmerhelves. He regards the family as under his protection but does not watch over every young wayward member and doesn't hold himself responsible for the survival and successes of individuals. If the family ever faces extinction, he'll kidnap and hide Silmerhelves to continue the family line while he makes things safe in Waterdeep for their eventual return.

Nymmurh can scry all of his portals constantly and adjust their magic to allow him, another creature, or items to travel through them in either direction. Whimsical, good-natured, and curious, Nymmurh desires to learn more about humankind because he sees them as the "great shaping force" destined to rule over or influence all of Faerûn during his lifetime.

He views dragons much as humans: potentially dangerous sources of entertainment it's prudent to learn all he can about. Nymmurh tries to hide his existence from other dragons as much as possible, swooping down to feed by night, and almost never venturing out of his lair in dragon form.

Nymmurh has a need to constantly learn more about Toril. He likes to guess what lies ahead in politics, trade, and technology, finding it all very entertaining. He has no desire to rule and finds no joy in outwitting or trapping others, preferring to watch from the background unnoticed—and unattacked.

Nymmurh lairs in the peaks of Alaron in the Moonshaes, in the Pit, a chain of caverns heaped with odd items of all sorts; he's an incurable collector of souvenirs. Nymmurh ignores the concept of domains, cheerfully roaming the North (the Sword Coast and near-offshore isles in particular) heedless of what dragons dwell where. The only areas he'll defend against intruders are his own lair and a larder island he's established in the Korinn Archipelago.

Olothontor
(The Minstrel Wyrm)

A venerable male blue dragon who dwells in Mount Araddyn (just north of Mount Sar along the Coast Road), Olothontor loves music. For about a fifth of each year, Harpers and other bards can be found at his lair, which he rarely leaves, on promised "'return visits" (some have been making annual appearances for nigh twenty years). These visits seldom overlap; the Minstrel Wyrm prefers to host one intruder at a time.

The front of Olothontor's lair is a crumbling old stone mansion built by titans (hence, large enough for the dragon) and enspelled by him so that entry into rooms causes favorite songs to be heard. These magical "recordings" warn Olothontor of intrusion and awe timid intruders into flight from this "haunted" place. Especially accomplished or promising guests are almost pleaded with to stay and lift the dragon's loneliness with music, but the hostile or tuneless feel the dragon's spells or breath weapon forthwith.

When Olothontor does take wing, he can be found anywhere between Mintarn and Anauroch, Neverwinter and Silverymoon, and occasionally as far south as Tethyr—wherever he can hear music. Olothontor is aware that other dragons regard certain areas as their personal domains and flies high (or very low to the ground) to avoid attracting attention to himself—but that's his habit anyway. He regards an attempt by another dragon to dwell or habitually perch on Mount Araddyn as an invasion of his own domain and ferociously battles any wyrm foolish enough to lair nearby. Olothontor just wants to be left alone by other dragons, orc hordes, adventurers, and anyone else who does not love music.

Palarandusk
(The Unseen Protector, The Sun Dragon)

Mature when Netheril was young, this male gold great wyrm prolonged his existence beyond natural death and decay through powerful magics, but the spells that maintain his magically knit form are now failing, and he dares materialize for only minutes per day—usually for scant seconds, to proffer or snatch something . . . or attack.

In solid form, Palarandusk appears as a fierce gold dragon whose jaws are white with age, whose scales are cracked and pale, and who weeps when he must slay—but slays nonetheless, without hesitation or mercy. His mastery of magic and spell roster is that of a 28th level wizard, and he employs many spells forgotten today. The rest of the time, Palarandusk exists as an invisible entity who can watch, listen, speak, and move about, but can't make physical attacks or cast spells (except those that affect only himself). In his invisible, semi-solid form, Palarandusk doesn't age, the spells that maintain him don't deteriorate further, and he suffers no harm from the elements.

Palarandusk is now the guardian of Ieirithymbul, a tiny mining village of gnomes in the valley of Felrenden (in the westernmost Sword Mountains, not far from The High Road southeast of Leilon). He regards the gnomes as his children and watches over them as their "Unseen Protector." He chafes in his decline, however, and dreams of once more being a widely respected power in the Sword Coast North (he once was, as "the Sun Dragon," protector of Neverwinter).

Enslaved by a Netherese sorcerer who altered his longevity and eventually his nature and abilities, Palarandusk flourished for centuries before his powers began to fail, and fear of the rising Arcane Brotherhood of Luskan drove him to "disappear." He studied magic, hiding in human form, for decades before being attacked by adventurers—and was so ravaged in that battle that his body was only held together by "a webwork of shattered enchantments." He rebuilt his frame into the slowly crumbling Unseen Protector he is today.

Palarandusk's body has continued to deteriorate despite several magical augmentations. He's recently learned much about current trade alliances and practises along The High Road and remains alert for news of doings elsewhere in the North (that may in time affect the valley he guards).

The aging gold wyrm possesses a thorough, sympathetic understanding of human and gnome nature. He believes dragons have a duty to live in harmony with the land, devouring prey only as needful, despoiling things only when ruination can't be avoided, and protecting their domains against damage from floods, fires, and invasions.

The Unseen Protector drifts from one gnome to another like an anxious but silent invisible sheepdog, trying to maintain an overall, ongoing picture of the whereabouts and doings of all Ieirithyn gnomes. He defends them without thought for his own safety, never employing traps or ruses and never sleeping. As he works, he's always contemplating ways in which his body can be magically strengthened.

Raulothim
(The Silent Shadow, The Wyrm of Axard)

This gigantic male emerald great wyrm won his more famous nickname for his habit of flying over almost every important event in the Sword Coast North a century ago, watching and never speaking. There was much speculation as to what mysterious master he served, but the truth was simply that Raulothim liked gliding on high winds and being a part of everything.

Now, however, a mature Raulothim spends long days lying motionless, gazing out over the North from his lair in the Pit of Stars, a volcanic cauldron on Axard, the northeasternmost isle of Ruathym. The sight of a spelljamming ship and the opening of a gate to another plane frightened him deeply: how many realms unknown to him exist? Who watches Toril from them, and what are their aims? Raulothim broods . . . whenever he's not building his magical might for the day when someone from otherwhere who thinks he knows too much will come to slay him.

The Silent Shadow gains magic by plundering ruins and tombs, tearing apart the towers of wounded or absent mages, and seizing or buying magic from adventurers. He largely ignores domains (though he defends Axard as one), considering himself free to roam all Toril. Well aware of other dragons' territorial claims, he escapes their notice entirely by never intruding needlessly into their territories.

Saryndalaghlothtor
(Lady Gemcloak, The Axemother)

This adult female crystal dragon makes her lair in a cave in The Crags, overlooking Mirabar. A recent arrival in the North, she's taken over a rich gem mine developed by the Kreeth goblin tribe (whom she exterminated) and spends much time in its depths, devouring the exposed ores.

Certain bold dwarves approached her to gain permission to mine in her lair and have struck a bargain: they're free to mine, defend her lair against intruders, and even to dwell in certain of its reaches, in return for feeding her all the gems and metals she desires. She's quite happy to eat flawed and shattered gems, low-grade metal ores, and rust scraps, and she has come to trust the dwarves—who in turn see her as the "mother" under whose protection they can found a new city or tribe.

She considers a very small area (Mirabar and a small stretch of the Crags) her domain but defends it fiercely. Other dragons, predators of all sorts (including greedy humans), and anyone the dwarves don't want around is considered unwanted and dealt with accordingly. Lady Gemcloak reportedly has a vicious streak in battle and loves maiming and spectacularly slaying foes. (Dismemberments and crushings are favorites.)

Thalagyrt
(Old Lord Memory)

This very old male mist dragon lairs in a damp, dripping cliff-face cavern on the shore of the Sea of Swords, north of Port Llast. He keeps to himself as much as possible, and many folk who dwell nearby don't know he exists at all. His hobby is collecting and remembering arcane lore valued by the intelligent races who dwell in the North (such as singular items of treasure and magical items), but one must trade information to gain desired information out of him, overcoming his distaste for being disturbed at all.

Thalagyrt can employ his own spells to project (as three-dimensional images) scenes that live in his memory—and his mind holds thousands upon thousands of such memories, some of them surprisingly important or private moments to humans or demihumans. (He has made a career of collecting mind-images from dying folk and others who desire to preserve recollections of events.)

A visitor who persuades (usually by payment of large amounts of gold coins) Old Lord Memory, for example, can see and hear the confrontation in the throne room in Suzail where the risen Azoun confronted the traitors who sought to murder him . . . or a tender, murmuring love-meeting between the great mages Elminster and The Simbul, Witch-Queen of Aglarond. These are but two examples of literally thousands of scenes, some of them crucial to an understanding of now-crumbling treaties and long-dead heroes, rulers, and villains.

Thalagyrt ignores the draconic concept of domains and avoids fighting any other wyrms he meets. "Just leave me alone" might well be his watchphrase. This means he's timid, but not craven. If forced to fight he will, and reportedly he can call (from afar, by magic) on swift and powerful aid from the Chosen, the Heralds, Malchor Harpell, and others who value the lore he preserves.

Tostyn Alaerthmaugh
(The Silver Flame)

This proud, reckless young adult male mercury dragon is swiftly rising to prominence in the daily news of the North, because he wants to be "in" at the heart of everything important that occurs. Hot-tempered and yet gallant and changeable in his likes and dislikes, Tostyn is lighthearted and enthusiastic by nature and spends his time dashing about, swooping down to make attacks or low rolls from the air. He lairs in the depths of the Everlake, at the heart of the Evermoors, but spends little time "at home."

Tostyn made his lair where he discovered an invisible column of air that keeps the water out of an underground mansion (probably once the abode of a powerful wizard). Now it houses his collection of magical or simply valuable automata, vessels, and oddities. Its owner is more often to be found somewhere near Waterdeep, rushing about "being a part of things." Until spells were mustered to drive him off, he made quite a habit of "crashing" the country parties of Waterdhavian nobles. Domains mean nothing to him—but he's just thoughtful enough to avoid blundering into the faces of larger, older

dragons. He hates no one until he's crossed with vicious or cruel acts; opponents who "play by the rules" are respected. He disdains beings who use poisons or magical deception, but he's essentially light-hearted and lives for the moment; grudges and feuds aren't for him.

Valamaradace

(The Dragon Queen of Silverymoon)

The Dragon Queen is a venerable female gold dragon seldom seen by humans except as Targarda, an agile, diminutive female human possessed of "elfin" looks (her favored form when on rare forays into civilized places).

Valamaradace dwells with her consort, the adult male silver dragon Deszeldaryndun Silverwing, in the Floating Mountain, a gigantic, hollow oval rock kept aloft by her spells (which also enshroud it in mists and direct it wherever she desires). Usually it hovers low over the woods due west of Everlund, or south of there on the verges of the High Forest. The draconic couple refer to it as "Softwing." Valamaradace determines the boundaries of their shared domain (detailed under Deszeldaryndun's entry). She concerns herself with patrolling its borders and planning how best to tend its growing things, rather as a diligent human minds a prized garden. Her consort deals with intruders and "civilized"' beings within the territory, whereas Valamaradace sees to removing diseased trees and plants, planting new ones, balancing light and shade, marsh and dry land, and so on to create as lush and stable a land of plenty as she can. She's constantly busy "adjusting the balance" of living things and refining her spells to give her greater control over the domain—and sharper weapons in battle.

Neutral-aligned beings are tolerated as travelers in her territory, but not as settlers; evil beings are destroyed or driven out upon detection (which has led some good-aligned beings and Harpers to describe the domain as "the Haven").

Valamaradace is gentle and soft-spoken; she rebukes pride and arrogance whenever she encounters it—and has found that many good creatures show all too much of such vices to the world. She uses gifts given to her for the benefit of all, so that none might go hungry or needy in the Haven. Creatures who take advantage of this policy to laze away their days here expecting free food and handouts are visited by superiors, creditors, or others (sent by the Dragon Queen) to be "set back to their destined tasks."

Voaraghamanthar

(The Mere Wyrm, The Black Death)

In the heart of the Mere of Dead Men, the vast coastal swamp between Leilon and Waterdeep, dwells the black dragon Voaraghamanthar. This marauder of the swamp avoids other dragons who intrude into the Mere or claim it as part of their domain and is said to have strange powers—able to emerge suddenly from beneath long-placid swamp waters; read and reason as intelligently, patiently, and humbly as a timid human scholar; and to be in two places at once.

That latter power is due to the true nature of the wyrm: "Voaraghamanthar" is really two identical twin adult male black dragons who pose as one dragon in their dealings with intruders into the Mere and with members of the Cult of the Dragon. Their true names are Voaraghamanthar and Waervaerendor, but they call each other by the short-names Weszlum and Welzour—that is, when they need to speak at all. The twins share an empathic link and work together with no trace of jealousy. They are thought to be seeking immortality (as all dragons are)—hence their dealings with the Cult. The Followers of the Scaly Way have thus far been unable to convince Voaraghamanthar to seek anything more than full and exhaustive details of dracolichdom.

They also seem to be interested in the treasures that might lie beneath the inky waters of the Mere (relics of earlier human realms) and in lurking underwater or otherwise lying low when other dragons are near—not, it appears, out of fear, but because they've no interest in disputes with other dragons.

Zundaerazylym

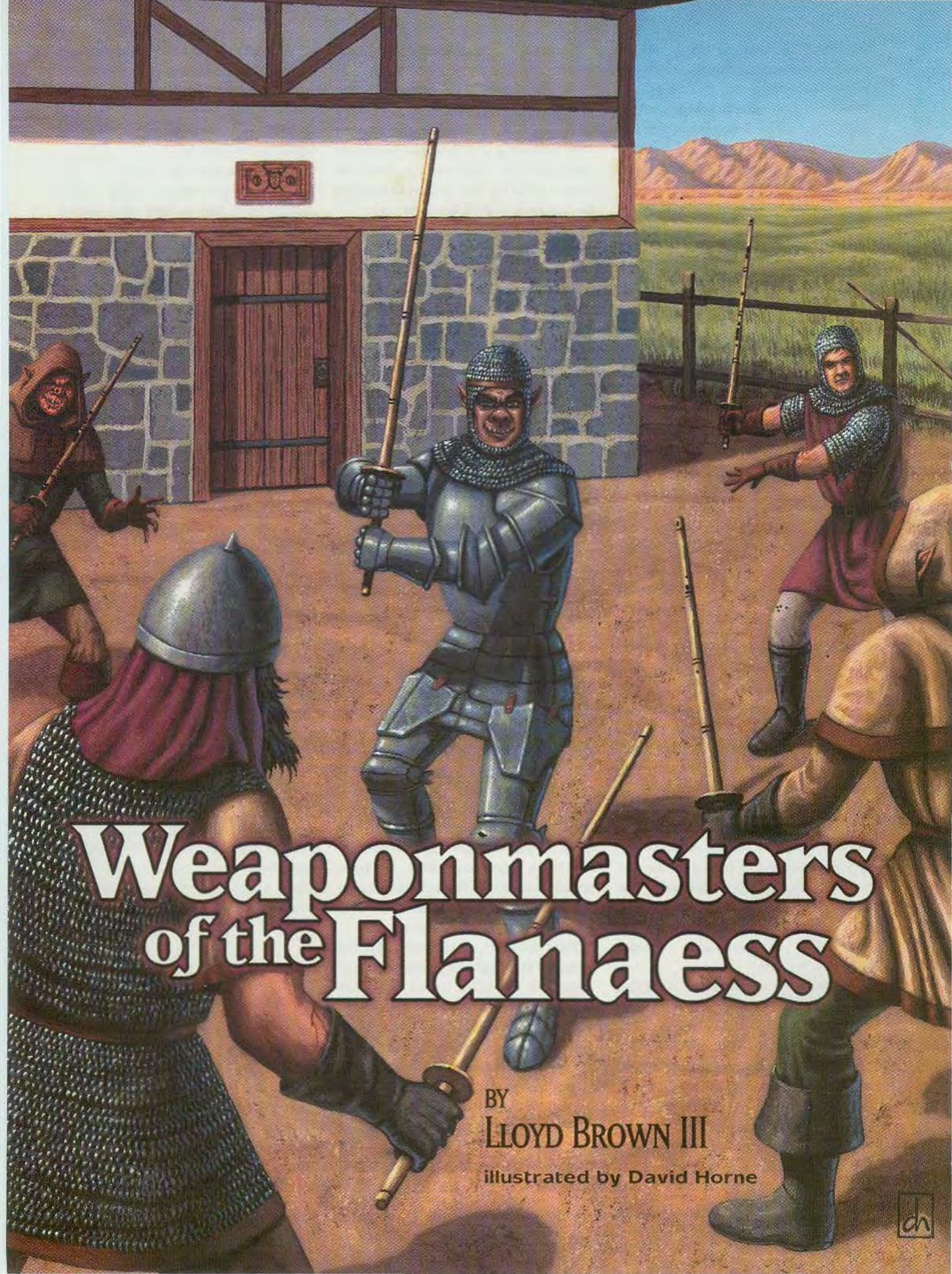
(The Laughing Wyrm)

This venerable female steel dragon has no real domain but considers the city of Neverwinter her territory, defending it against other dragons who dare show themselves or try to dominate its inhabitants. Battle so excites her that she chortles and hoots almost constantly; hence, her nickname.

Zundaerazylym has dwelt "in hiding" in Neverwinter for years, taking dragon form only to fight off a raiding mage of the Brotherhood of the Arcane and to devour a pair of wyverns who laired too near in The Crags. The Laughing Wyrm poses as Amundra Nelaerdra, a jolly, plump, gossiping laundress and seamstress. More than once, the "Laughing Laundress of Neverwinter" has smuggled embarrassed guests out of the Mask, a notorious festhall, in gigantic baskets of laundry, allowing them to avoid confrontations with rivals, spouses, superiors, or admirers. The steel dragon has an understanding with the owner of the Mask, the mage Ophala Cheldarstorn, who sometimes aids Zundaerazylym with her spells.

Zundaerazylym likes adventurers, is wary of wizards she doesn't know, and dislikes tyrants of all sorts, from children lording over other urchins in alleys to kings who mistreat their subjects or try to conquer new territory; more than once she's taught sailors from Luskan and overblown adventurer-mages a lesson—usually luring them into private places by posing as a flirtatious tavern wench, then changing to dragon form with clashing jaws and wild laughter. Usually she lets those she's thus terrified flee unscathed, but she has been known to tear a mage's staff, cloak, and garments all away, or break a sailor's swordarm and the sword with it.

Ed Greenwood is the originator of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® *setting and carries all of its crumbling castles, bustling cities, flashing spells—and soaring dragons—in his head. When he's crossing the border every year on his way to the* GENCON® *Game Fair, he hopes it doesn't show. The rest of the time, he doesn't care if it does.*


Weaponmasters
of the Flanaess
BY
LLOYD BROWN III
illustrated by David Horne
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Great heroes fill the GREYHAWK® setting. Brave knights work to stem the tide of Iuz in the northwest, hardy marines protect sea-faring merchants from monsters and pirates in the south and east, and cunning rangers protect common folk from the dangers of wood and mountain. Other heroes look to the future and patiently labor to teach others their skill with sword and spear.

In addition to these exceptional schools taught by famous and respected masters, many smaller or less recognized schools dot the Flanaess. Some are dedicated centers of learning, while others seek to make a profit and only reluctantly teach the use of any weapons. The prospective student should beware and would be wise to learn as much as possible about the school before spending his hard-earned coin there.

The proficiencies and options mentioned here come from different sources. In addition to *The Complete Fighter's Handbook* and *PLAYER'S OPTION®: Combat & Tactics*, the following sources might also prove useful: *DM OPTION®: High-Level Campaigns*, *The Complete Paladin's Handbook*, *The Complete Ranger's Handbook*, and other volumes of the Complete Handbook series.

The school descriptions appear in a common format:

School Name (or chief instructor's name).

Teachers: Teachers include the chief instructor, his staff and assistants, and possibly the school's owner, financial backer, and other personalities who might influence the school.

Location & Facilities: This section identifies the school's location and describes the physical makeup of the school. If the chief instructor has followers, this section includes their disposition as well.

Curriculum: This section identifies which weapons and specializations the school teaches and describes the school's style, preferred combat options, signature moves, and tenets. Each also teaches its own style specialization, a specific description of a "local fighting style" described in *PLAYER'S OPTION: Combat & Tactics*, page 78.

Possible NWPs for these and other schools include alertness (from *The Complete Ranger's Handbook*), armorer, blind fighting, bowyer/fletcher, death blow (*DM OPTION: High-Level Campaigns*), endurance, frighten/challenge (*DM OPTION: High-Level Campaigns*), healing, jousting (*The Complete Paladin's Handbook*), riding, tumbling, style analysis (new), tactics (from *The Age of Heroes* in the Revised DARK SUN® Campaign Setting), and weaponsmith. Other NWPs might be available, depending on the chief instructor's background and beliefs. All schools teach the new proficiency called style knowledge.

The Students: This section identifies what famous personalities might have studied there, as well as where most students come from or what their inspiration might be.

Entry & Fees: Entry includes the school's eligibility requirements and costs. Students learn one skill at a time, and some skills often require prerequisites. To learn lance specialization at one school, for example, might require the student to learn the long sword and mace, then the riding and heraldry NWPs. Thus, the school collects more of the student's money and has more time to impress its philosophy and ideals on the student.

The fees section includes notes on level training for DMs who use that option. For level advancement, the DM can roll 1d6 to determine the minimum training time instead of rolling Wisdom scores for every instructor. The d6 roll indicates the number of weeks the student must train before making his Intelligence or Wisdom check (whichever is higher) to see if he learned enough to gain the new level.

Before any student joins a school, the instructors require him to spar with a student or junior instructor. During this bout, the seniors appraise the student with their style knowledge skill, seeking evidence of previous training. They also ask him if he has trained elsewhere. No instructor takes a student with previous training in a major school for fear that he is a spy coming to learn his secrets. Similarly, no student of an established school is allowed to teach others without the express consent of the chief instructor.

While the fees might appear high, these instructors are some of the best in the land. Actually, the skills cost about 1,200–1,600 gp each, which is reasonable for an expense that characters spend only once every few levels. At the DM's option, beginning characters could start with a debt that represents the cost of their training. On the other hand, they might have to spend time adventuring before being able to fill all of their initial proficiencies. The final call is up to the DM.

Schools of Greyhawk

Academy of the Suel

Teachers: Holan is secretly a former member of the Scarlet Brotherhood, now willing to teach nearly anyone. He is nearly pure Suel, as anyone can tell by his pale skin, cornsilk hair, and violet eyes. He is lean, but tough and hardy, capable of outlasting all of his students. Most of his students only know him as a wanderer from the south.

Holan (13th-level human fighter): AL LN; AC 4 (2); MV 12; F13; hp 102; THAC0 8 (1 with staff); #AT 2 or 5/2 with staff; Dmg by weapon type or +7 with staff; S 15, D 18, C 17, I 13, W 12, Ch 13; ML 18; *ring of protection +2, staff +4, boots of speed*

WP: Staff, staff specialization, staff mastery, spear, small staff style (new), disarm (new), two-handed style specialization, parrying (new).

NWP: Alertness, blind-fighting, endurance, tumbling, land-based riding, artistic ability (poetry), reading/write common, read/write Ancient Suel.

Location & Facilities: Holan's small camp is set up near the point where Nyrond abuts the County and Duchy of Urnst, technically just inside the Duchy's border—comfortably far from the Scarlet Brotherhood's domain. He has a few peasant buildings that he bought for an inflated price to appease the suspicion of the knight who sold them to him. These buildings house Holan and his students. He has no followers.

Curriculum: *WP:* Hand axe, chain, dagger, knife, staff (specialization, mastery), spear, broad sword, short sword, trident, two-handed style specialization, disarm, parrying. *NWP:* Alertness, blind-fighting, endurance, tumbling. Endurance is first, usually followed by any basic weapon proficiency. Before

learning specialization in the staff, students must learn alertness. Before learning staff mastery, students must learn blind-fighting and style knowledge.

Holan calls his fighting style the "small staff" style. Masters of the small staff style frequently use disarms, which they call "tapping the knuckles" because of their favorite way of causing an enemy to release his weapon. They also use pull/trip maneuvers often, especially if they need time to withdraw.

Holan teaches dagger use in the ancient style, with the blade held downward and the edge pointing away from the arm. Most schools teach students to block the wrist when they face a knife-fighter. If an enemy tries that technique with Holan's students, they find themselves blocking the blade of the dagger. This style has a shorter effective range than the more common sword-style of holding the blade, so it gains no game benefits or disadvantages.

The Students: Most of Holan's older students are also Scarlet Brotherhood expatriates of pure or nearly-pure Suel blood. They serve as assistant instructors, but they also spend a great deal of time continuing their own training. They teach only to help fund their own lessons. All of his original students are familiar with the small staff style.

Most new students began as curious locals, either Suel, Oeridian from nearby Nyrond, or mixed blood. They learned a few skills, discovered how useful they were, and then started convincing others to join. Holan thus has an odd structuring of his students. The oldest level are his Brotherhood friends, then the veteran locals, followed in turn by the newest recruits. He has 20–25 students at any time, of which nine or ten are veterans and three are his long time students from the South. Mages, thieves, and druids sometimes join the school for knowledge of some of his unusual weapons.

Entry & Fees: For now, Holan is willing to accept nearly anybody not from another school. He prefers the taller races, however, and accepts few gnomes and halflings. He would quietly kill anyone he believed to be a spy from the Scarlet Brotherhood. He has a goal of 50 students; when his following swells to that size, he plans to make tighter restrictions for new students.

For the same reason, fees are low. Level training is 40 gp/week. Learning most proficiencies costs 85 gp/week. Specialization in the staff costs more per week in addition to more time: 100 gp/week. None of his local students are yet ready to learn mastery of the staff, but he would require that he know the student for at least seven or eight years and charge 125 gp/week for the training. Level training costs the standard 100 gp/week.

Kurlotz's Training Hall

Teachers: Kurlotz is a relatively friendly half-orc who set up this school to try to rid himself of the stigma of his nonhuman heritage. Since he was often persecuted for his heritage, the school allows students of any race. While many people regard him as a potential threat to the nearby areas, most swordsmen admit that he is a deadly, if unsophisticated, fighter.

Kurlotz (10th-level half-orc fighter) AL N(G); AC –2; MV 12; F10; hp 91; THAC0 11; #AT 2; Dmg by weapon type; S 18/72, D 13, C 18, I 11, W 12, Ch 10; ML 18; *plate mail +3, shield +1, battle axe +2, ring of the ram, horn of blasting.*

WP: Battle axe, battle axe specialization, all swords, flail, avalanche style.

NWP: Alertness, endurance, enemy reading (new), land-based riding, style knowledge, swimming.

Location & Facilities: Kurlotz's school occupies a single square tower six stories high about six miles north of the Bone March in Ratik. This tower is packed with Kurlotz's 60 followers (chain mail and two-handed sword), his household guard (10 first-level fighters with plate mail, body shield, and battle axe), and his students, who number from 12–60. Due to the number of bodies, Kurlotz has recently ordered his followers to camp outside in tents until they can build a separate barracks.

All training is done outside, regardless of weather. Kurlotz himself doesn't care if three-inch hail bombards Oerth; he's on the ground every day practicing his skills and drilling his followers. His training ground is a large, flat dirt square inside a 9' tall wooden wall that surrounds his tower. "Running the wall" is a common punishment for light rule violations. Jogging around it in heavy armor is a brutal exercise.

Curriculum: *WP:* All axes, all clubs, footman's flail, glaive, maul, long sword, bastard sword, and two-handed sword. *NWP:* Alertness, bravery, death blow, endurance, enemy reading. Kurlotz generally teaches whatever skills students wish to learn, except for bravery, which he restricts to his human students.

Kurlotz's students nearly always charge the enemy for the initial attack. They look for flashy moves such as pull/trip maneuvers and often make good use of the terrain and available materials. They are versatile enough to carry a smaller secondary weapon and bring a shield into position if they are seriously wounded. As a group, they are skillful in delivering the greatest possible number of attackers against a small group of defenders. As part of Kurlotz's avalanche style, he compares a military unit to a single weapon and teaches his students to use all of their forces to best effect in a battle.

The Students: Unfortunately, Kurlotz's plan to improve his image has backfired. His students include several half-breed humanoids and unsavory humans. The students are known to be short-tempered, and the cramped quarters spark at least one brawl a day. The humans attracted to Kurlotz want to learn "the orcish" way to fight, either to join them or to kill them. A handful of his human students are of good alignment, but most students are neutral or evil.

Entry & Fees: Kurlotz's school is open to all races, but since his goal is to gain acceptance among humans, he charges humans, elves, and dwarves lower fees to entice them into the school. These races pay 60 gp/week for level training, and 80 gp/week for proficiencies. The half-breeds and others pay 150% of these prices.

The Highfolk Archery School

Teachers: Ymaris Blue-Eyes is a high elf reputed to have killed a frost giant with a single arrow from over 100 yards. He originally taught the youngsters in his own band but decided to open up a school for outsiders and has thrived as an instructor for over 200 years. His assistants are members of his band and

include a 7th/7th female elf fighter/mage, an 8th level half-elf ranger, and an 8th/9th elven fighter/thief.

Ymaris Blue-eyes (12th-level elven fighter) AL CG; AC 0; MV 12; F12; hp 78; THAC0 9; #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; S 17, D 17, C 15, I 15, W 14, Ch 16; ML 16; *leather armor +2, shield +2, long bow +3, boots of varied tracks, elven cloak, long sword of life stealing.*

WP: Long sword, short sword, long bow, long bow specialization, "one shot, one kill" style, changing seasons style (new), fencing (new).

NWP: Enemy reading, style knowledge, animal lore, tracking, survival (forest), bowyer/fletcher (2 slots), herbalism.

Location & Facilities: Ymaris's camp is outside of the city of Highfolk but sits near enough for close protection in case the school needs it. The camp is a collection of simple huts surrounded by a wall of wooden posts. Invaders are subject to murderous arrow fire from one or more of the six 30'-tall towers that stand just inside the wall.

Most classes are naturally taught out of doors, and Ymaris is fond of designating impromptu targets while on wilderness jaunts of up to 12 miles in length. Ymaris himself lives like his students, in a rustic but clean home with no servants. His followers (80 elves in leather armor, short sword & short bow) patrol frequently to make sure that the nearby area is kept free of enemies.

Curriculum: *WP:* Hand axe, all bows (including crossbows), dagger, javelin, spear, long sword, short sword, one-handed style specialization, two-weapon style specialization. *NWP:* Alertness, bowyer/fletcher, enemy reading, fencing. Ymaris teaches self-reliance and insists that his students learn to make their own bows and arrows before teaching them any skills other than standard weapon proficiency.

Warriors consider Ymaris's most valuable teaching not his technical skill but his advice on how, when, and where to shoot. Ymaris teaches students to maximize their success by making aimed shots (see new combat options below), attacking by surprise, firing from behind or a flank, and holding a second arrow shot until after the opponent's shield has been used for the round. Their personalized arrows often distinguish his students, as do their custom-sized bows, allowing for perfect match of power and lightness. According to Ymaris, the perfect bow reaches from the outstretched hand to the side of the foot when the student stands with arms outstretched.

Ymaris prefers to train beginning archers with bird arrows—arrows that are notoriously difficult to use. A student who learns with them has an easier time learning to use normal flight or sheaf arrows. Any fletcher trained in his school knows how to make these arrows.

Ymaris's sword style calls for broad knowledge rather than specialization. When fighting a wizard, for example, he advocates using a dagger or short sword. The greater speed allows the fighter to interrupt the wizard's spellcasting. When facing multiple opponents, the student should use two weapons and eliminate each enemy as quickly as possible. Against a single strong opponent, sword and shield is best. He calls his sword style "Changing Seasons" and sometimes compares each of the four fighting styles with one of the four seasons.

The Students: Of the standard PC races, Ymaris only teaches elves, half-elves, and rangers of all races. Many multi-classed elves train under him, as do single-classed rogues. He has few wizard students, although the occasional priest trains under him for a while. His students often become leaders of raiding bands or border guards for elven communities, helping to fight off humanoids and monsters. Perhaps not surprisingly, he also has centaur, satyr, and other forest creatures as students. These specials often pay in services, rather than in coin, since they don't amass wealth the way most humans and demihumans do.

During the Wars, Ymaris stretched his time and energy as far as possible to accommodate his swelling ranks of students, but the Wars also claimed many of these new students. His surviving students, who currently number from 30–40 at a time, often interrupt their training to use their skills hunting servants of Iuz in the Vesve Forest and protecting the Velverdyva River that allows trade and communication between Perrenland and Veluna/Furyondy. The total number of students in Ymaris's school is over 100, but their other activities keep them

away for long periods of time.

Ymaris's most infamous student is an elf now known as "the Serpent" because his deadly arrows are painted to resemble a striking snake and are sometimes poisoned. After learning nearly everything Ymaris had to teach, he became an assassin for Iuz. The Serpent's stealth is legendary, and his accuracy is terrifying. His current whereabouts are unknown, and those who know about his current profession fear that Iuz might have given him an *amulet of proof against detection and location*. Ymaris has offered a reward of 10,000 gp for anyone who returns the Serpent to him alive.

Entry & Fees: Anyone who does not fit the above categories (elves, half-elves, or rangers) may not train, although Ymaris allows them to purchase equipment from his highly skilled craftsmen. His senior students include many excellent arrow-makers, and archers from across the west come to buy bows, arrows, or even quivers from his school.

Ymaris charges 50 gp/week for level training and 100/week for other training. To help defray their costs, many students spend at least part of their time making bows or arrows for the school. The school goes through countless arrows during training, and the demand for them never ceases.

Juross of Leukish

Teachers: Juross is a highly acclaimed teacher whose experience against the giants makes him both fit in with and stand above the other citizens of the Yeomanry. Although he is a master of the spear, he is also proficient with the swords broad weapon group and fights aggressively and skillfully with any weapon (*Player's Option: Combat & Tactics* fully describes weapon groups).

One of his senior students is a female human fighter (5th level) follower who teaches beginners the basic proficiencies of long sword, spear, bow, dagger, or hand axe. Reltha has been with Juross since he established the school almost 15 years ago and has become indispensable in running the whole affair.

Juross (16th-level human ranger) AL NG; AC –1; MV 12; R16; hp 108; THAC0 5; #AT 2; Dmg by weapon type +1; S 16, D 15, C 17, I 16, W 15, Ch 14; ML 17; *bracers of defense AC 3, ring of protection +3 5' radius, spear +4, long sword +1, +4 vs. reptiles, rope of entanglement, boots of levitation.*

WP: Long sword, spear, spear specialization, spear mastery, oak roots style (new), disarm (2 slots), fencing.

NWP: Enemy reading, style knowledge, tracking, animal lore, animal training, engineering, speak Hill Giant, speak Dwarven, set snares, jumping, land-based riding.

Location & Facilities: The school lies well inside the borders of the Yeomanry on top of a slight rise that provides a distant view of the north. The southern edge of the ridge is slightly steeper, but two rough stone stairways cut through it and lead to either side of the school complex.

Six buildings make up the official school grounds. The main building is an ancient four-story stone fortress that used to be a mint and armory. The outlying buildings are made of wood and are much younger. Three of these are dormitories; one for men, a small one for women, and a separate building for Juross, his followers, and his instructors. A tall, airy building holds the mounts of the many nobles who train with him, as well as a few of his own nonhuman followers. The last building is a shrine to Ehlonna. The entrance to the shrine is not visible from the other buildings and students believe that secretive types often leave messages for Juross concerning the movements and actions of evil forces. Juross visits the temple every dawn, lending weight to the belief.

Curriculum: *WP:* All swords, spear, dagger, shield proficiency (*Combat & Tactics*), long sword specialization, spear specialization, spear mastery, disarm, enemy reading, parrying, fencing, one-weapon specialization, two-handed specialization (spear only), and weapon and shield specialization (spear only). *NWP:* Endurance, survival, swimming (a common exercise), tracking.

Juross is a vocal advocate of the spear's superiority over the sword. Those who have demonstrated their skill with the spear (by learning the two-handed style specialization with the spear) may learn his personal style. Juross is maniacal about footwork and sometimes makes his students hold a position for hours. Juross's students often identify themselves by saluting their enemy with their spear before attacking and by holding their spears at rest point upward with the shaft tucked against the shoulder.

The Students: Juross's students include many Yeomanry natives who rub shoulders (and blades!) with nobles and military commanders from across the western frontier of the Flanaess. The foreigners are usually sent to learn what Juross has to teach and bring it back to their own military force. The foreigners include human, elven, and halflings of strong Good morals.

Entry & Fees: Juross's requirements include acceptance of a *geas* not to bear arms against the Yeomanry, a stiff acceptance fee (not refunded if the student is expelled or quits), and strict regulation of the order in which skills are taught. The caster of the *geas* is a closely allied elven enchanter from the court of Celene. The two must keep their friendship secret until attitudes change in the insular elven kingdom.

Juross's acceptance fee is 500 gp, which is paid once. His rate for level training is 120 gp/week. Learning proficiencies costs 155 gp/ week.

The Holy Training Hall of the Hart

Teachers: Sir Agravael, Marchwarden of the Coast, is one of the rare Knights of the Hart. He was decorated (and wounded) heavily during the Wars. He grieved the loss of many friends during the same time and attributed many of their deaths to insufficient training. Never one to complain when he could act, he established his school to make sure that next time the people on the field and the people giving the orders both know what to do.

Gossip surrounds the paladin: he had a holy sword and lost it fishing in the Nyr Dyv, he has a dryad lover, he teaches because he's scared to fight, and anything that people can dream up. In truth, he is wholly devoted to his school and spends little time outside of its grounds. Sir Agravael charges high fees to generate money for Nyrond, where he secretly sends quite a bit of the school's profits to help rebuild the nation. He would love to see one of his students establish a school there, although he does not wish to mention it aloud until

he finds somebody with the right combination of talent, attitude, and piety.

Sir Agravael (12th-level human paladin): AL LG; AC-4; MV 12; Pa12; hp 72; THAC0 9; #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; S 18/42, D 12, C 14, I 12, W 17, Ch 18; ML 16; *field plate +3, shield +2, long sword +4, defender, stone horse, amulet of life protection.*

WP: Long sword, striking falcon style (new), sword and shield style specialization, shield proficiency, lance, fencing, parrying.

NWP: Land-based riding (3 slots), heraldry, etiquette, jousting, style knowledge, enemy reading.

Location & Facilities: The school is about 60 miles south of Willip, inside the stronghold of the Knight Commander Maugrim. The school has the Knight Commander's protection and sanction, although he rarely enters it himself. The school has ample armory, stables, kennels, and all of the trappings of a noble stronghold. To make sure that Sir Agravael's authority is inviolate, Maugrim treats it as a separate stronghold and sends messengers to bring Sir Agravael to him whenever he wishes to speak to him. In return for the use of the facilities and powerful backing, Maugrim's captains train at no charge.

Although they are less than a mile from the Nyr Dyv, no beach comes closer than 10 miles. The students go there daily on horseback, so invaders might be surprised to run into some of the best fighters in Furyondy upon landing.

Curriculum: *WP:* Dagger, lance, mace, morning star, long sword, bastard sword, broad sword, two-handed sword, sword specialization (any of the above), weapon and shield specialization, shield proficiency. *NWP:* Etiquette, healing, heraldry, jousting, riding (land-based). Before learning any weapons, new students must learn etiquette. Before learning anything other than common weapon proficiency, students must learn heraldry and style knowledge.

Strangers can recognize Sir Agravael's students by their light, seemingly casual grip on their weapons, their no-nonsense swordplay, and their deftness with the shield. They use a judicious combination of standard attacks, shield-punches, and

parrying, which Sir Agravael calls the "guardian angel maneuver," designed to protect a fallen ally. Rivals claim that the style, though aggressive and effective, does not allow for much variety, and its practitioners sometimes fall for a clever, well-timed maneuver.

The Students: The students include paladins, fighters, crusaders, clerics, and multi-classed fighters. Most of the fighters are followers of a cleric or priestly order of some kind. Many are knights from a variety of orders. Some are noble in their own right, and a few are the heirs (or possible heirs) of high nobility. Together, they represent the aristocracy of Furyondy, Veluna, Urnst, and Nyrond.

Entry & Fees: One does not ask to join Sir Agravael's school; one receives the honor of an invitation. Sir Agravael is widely known from his part in the Wars, and many people he hardly knew then claim close friendship now. He sometimes accepts referrals from this wide circle of fair-weather friends if the applicant is a lawful good warrior or priest. Any Knight of the Hart can recommend a PC to him and assure his acceptance. Another source of possible entry includes acceptance as a reward for services performed by Sir Agravael, Maugrim, or other nobles in the area. The noble might even partially sponsor (that is, pay fees for) the student, depending on the difficulty and magnitude of the service.

Because most of his students are nobles, Sir Agravael can afford to charge more than most teachers. Level training runs 130 gp/week. Proficiencies cost 125 gp/week. In addition, each certificate given for completing training carries a fee of 50 gp.

New Equipment

Bird arrows

Fletching provides stability during flight, but the feathers also create drag, which slows the missile. Bird arrows use minimal fletching, a short shaft of light wood, and a small head—all of which increase speed in flight. A quick arrow is necessary to bring down a bird on the wing, which is the purpose of these arrows.

Bird arrows have the same range as sheaf arrows, but they inflict only 1d4/1d3 points of damage, and all attacks are made at –1 due to the weapon's poor stability. They cost half as

Learning New Proficiencies

Class	Time to Learn WP	Time to Learn NWP
Warrior	12 weeks	12 weeks
Priest	16 weeks	12 weeks
Rogue	16 weeks	16 weeks
Wizard	24 weeks	12 weeks

much as flight arrows. Because they are so quick, however, the target gains no bonus to AC for high Dexterity.

Training Sword

This weapon is made out of a light, flexible wood. At most, it inflicts a single point of damage. If a character finds himself in the poor position of having to use it in real combat, the character does not suffer the penalties of being disarmed, and he can still use all appropriate combat options. Furthermore, if the character is specialized, he may make additional attacks and inflict additional damage as well. Lastly, training swords are extremely quick and gain +1 on attack rolls. Training weapons can be spears, staves, axes or common bludgeons (maces, flails, and others) as well. They cost 20% of the price of a normal weapon and weigh about half as much.

Training Armor

Training armor is not designed to protect someone from an earnest attack, only to prevent accidents involving training weapons. Training armor is essentially heavy cloth with wood or leather plates over the chest and stomach. It is also often heavily patched and sewn over, having survived many students. It weighs 15 pounds or more and provides the same protection as padded armor (AC 8). It costs 5 gp at most.

Training & Time

The time it takes to learn a weapon proficiency depends on the character's class. Weapon specialization, if allowed at all, requires three times as long. Multiclassed characters use the shortest time.

Some of the schools teach nonweapon proficiencies as well. For learning nonweapon proficiencies, characters go by which proficiency group they are allowed to use, not necessarily their class. A bard, for example, spends only 12 weeks to learn a nonweapon proficiency, since he could claim use of the warrior or wizard group, rather than the 16 weeks other rogues require. (These times are based on the level advancement of the character classes at a rate of 4 weeks per additional level required to earn the proficiency slot.)

Once a character learns a skill, the school awards him with a certificate announcing the fact. The certificate might mean greater pay for the student if he is a mercenary, caravan or merchant guard, soldier or military officer, or somehow makes a living by his weapon.

While these learning times might seem short, the student is wholly immersed in surroundings designed to teach these skills and devotes his full time and attention to learning them. The DM should feel free to extend the times if he wishes. If the DM does increase the time required, he should also decrease the cost per week accordingly to keep the overall cost about the same.

New Weapon Proficiencies

Each of these skills costs one proficiency slot, but other new proficiencies might cost more. If the campaign uses PLAYER'S OPTION rules, they should cost 2 CP for warriors, 3 CP for others. The proficiencies that represent the fighting styles described above are specific examples of "local fighting styles" mentioned on page 78 of *Combat & Tactics*.

A "min-maxer" could easily create a powerful character with these proficiencies, choosing to specialize in a weapon and adding fighting styles and other weapon proficiencies in dangerous combinations that threaten to make him unbeatable. Readers might notice by the number of proficiencies allowed to the instructors described here that the *Skills & Powers* option allowing warriors extra weapon proficiencies based on bonus slots or character points for Intelligence is not used. Using that option gives warriors far too much of an advantage with the rules presented here.

Avalanche Style

Kurlotz's style with two-handed weapons allows for an additional, risky attack with the back, pommel, or handle of the weapon. A fighter using the avalanche style may make one attack over his normal allotment at the end of a round for 1d3 points of damage (plus Strength bonuses, but no bonus for a magical weapon or specialization). Using this option means the character must approach closer to the enemy than his weapon comfortably allows, and he automatically loses initiative the next round as he maneuvers to regain a favorable position. This style applies only when using a weapon with both hands.

Changing Seasons Style

Characters proficient in Ymaris' sword style may change from one fighting style to another without penalty, once per round at the end of the round. They use this ability skillfully to adapt to changing combat situations. Thus, a character might begin with two-weapon style. If seriously injured, the character might switch to weapon & shield style, dropping his secondary weapon and readying a shield.

Disarm

This maneuver is an excellent way to remove an enemy's advantage due to specialization or a powerful magical weapon. Schools that stress this option often teach students to specialize in this technique, allowing them to learn the disarm proficiency. Devoting one slot to this proficiency allows a character to make disarm attacks at –2 on the attack roll, instead of the normal –4. A second proficiency slot removes all attack penalties. The character still suffers the normal +1 initiative penalty.

Fencing

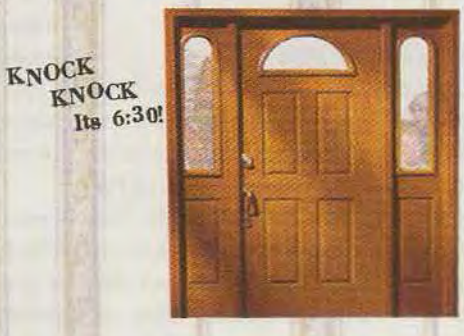
With this proficiency, a character can judge the approximate skill of any enemy by sparring with him for one round. The character does not make any real attacks during this round. Instead, he performs feints to test the opponent's reaction. At the end of the round, the character can make a proficiency check. If the check succeeds, the character can

Billy is asked to DM.

Billy has no time.

Billy says "yes" anyway.

Billy is screwed.



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New Nonweapon Proficiencies

General

Name	Slots	Ability	Modifier	CP	Score	Relevant Ability
Style Knowledge	1	Int	–1	2	6	Int/Knowledge

Warrior

Name	Slots	Ability	Modifier	CP	Score	Relevant Ability
Enemy Reading	2	Wis	–2	6	5	Wisdom/Intuition

estimate the enemy's modified THAC0 used during that round (which might well be his natural THAC0 modified by Strength, magic weapon, specialization, spells, and situational modifiers). The DM can give the character a score that is within 1 or 2 points, or roll 1d6:

1d6	Estimated THAC0
1–2	1 high
3–4	Accurate
5	1 low
6	2 low

Oak Roots Style

Juross's "oak roots" style allows the spear user to add +1 to damage when he is on firm ground. Thus, the benefit does not apply to fighting from the edge of a cliff, in water, or when mounted.

Parrying

This proficiency allows an armed character to protect himself more successfully than an untrained character. When the character chooses the parry option during combat, the character's AC improves by 2 additional points. Most characters therefore improve their AC by half their level plus 2; warriors improve their AC by half their level plus 3.

Small Staff Style

When a student first begins using the staff, it seems to be a huge, clumsy weapon. As the student becomes more familiar with the weapon, it becomes easier to use, feeling steadily less bulky and clumsy. The style emphasizes getting inside an opponent's defenses, where he cannot block the student's staff. Proficiency in the style gives +1 to all attack rolls against armed opponents.

One Shot, One Kill Style

Students who master Ymaris's archery style may make a called shot for double damage with a missile weapon at any target within short range. The multiple applies only to weapon damage, not modifiers for Strength or magic. As with other called shots, the attack suffers a +1 initiative penalty and –4 attack roll penalty. The character may perform this action in place of a normal attack any time it applies (that is, when the target is within short range).

Striking Falcon Style

Sir Agravael calls his style the "striking falcon style" and teaches it only to characters 6th level or higher who pass subtle alignment tests (including use of his paladin ability to *detect evil intent*). The style gives the character a –1 bonus on initiative rolls in melee combat due to Sir Agravael's theory of "conservation of movement" and rigorous speed drills.

Style Knowledge

A character who has knowledge of this proficiency can automatically identify any person who trained in the same school as the character by watching him fight for one round or more. On a successful proficiency check, the character may identify a graduate of another school if that school is one that might be familiar to that character. Any of the schools listed here qualify for the latter requirement. Others might as well, depending on the campaign.

Enemy Reading

Before a combatant makes an attack, he often must position his feet, change the grip on his weapon, bend his knees, or make some other preparatory move. In combat, this preparation is called "telegraphing" the move to the enemy. While many people can see these moves, only highly skilled fighters can "read" this telegraphing quickly enough to react to it. A character with this skill who makes a successful proficiency check at the beginning of the combat receives a +1 bonus to his AC when fighting an armed opponent. A character cannot take this proficiency at first level.

New Combat Options

Aimed Shot

This combat option is available to characters proficient with the long or short bow. The character may wait until the end of the round and fire a single arrow with +2 on the attack roll instead of taking his normal rate of fire. A character firing his last arrow, using an *arrow of slaying*, or making a called shot would be wise to consider this option.

Force Retreat

This option allows a character to forego a possible hit in order to drive the enemy back with either an easy smack on the front of the breastplate or a blinding flurry of exaggerated blows. A successful attack forces the enemy back five feet. The target is forced either directly backward or backward and one step to the left or right, at the attacker's option.

This move differs from the retreat described in *Combat & Tactics* in that the defender does not receive a saving throw to attempt to hold his position. A character cannot use this option against a charging, running, or sprinting defender, or against a monster using special movement (hopping, flying, etc.)

Characters force an enemy's retreat to break up shield walls or pike hedges, or to push a defender into a spellcaster and ruin his spell. They might also wish to push him over a cliff or into a pit or any other hazard. One of the best advantages of forcing a retreat is the ability to safely withdraw from the combat once the opponent is out of reach (thus avoiding the free back attacks normally allowed).

Lloyd has never been to Greyhawk, and his travel agent gives him funny looks whenever he tries to book a flight there. He is certain, however, that their schools are much more interesting than the ones in Florida.

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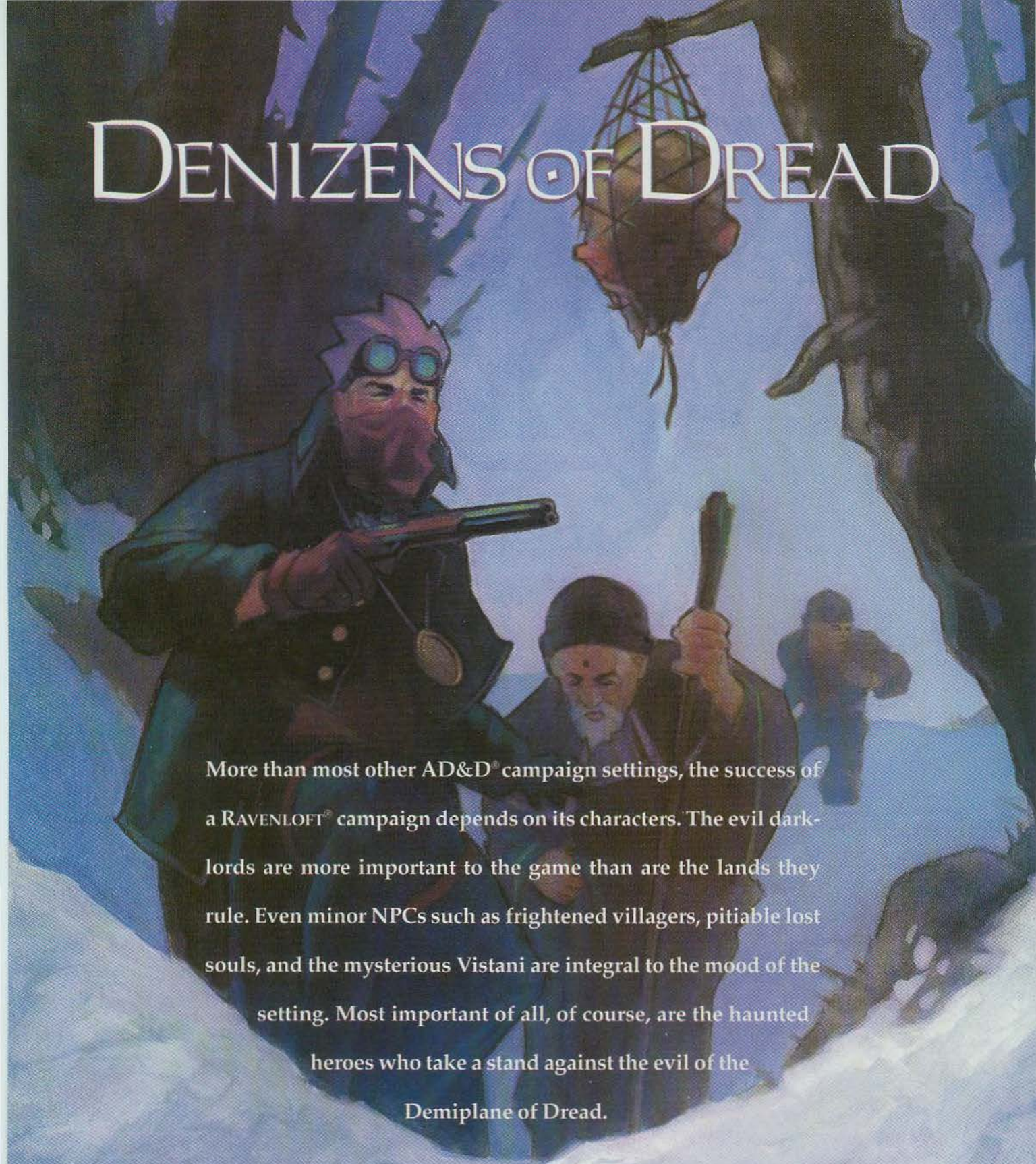
DENIZENS OF DREAD



More than most other AD&D® campaign settings, the success of a RAVENLOFT® campaign depends on its characters. The evil dark-lords are more important to the game than are the lands they rule. Even minor NPCs such as frightened villagers, pitiable lost souls, and the mysterious Vistani are integral to the mood of the setting. Most important of all, of course, are the haunted heroes who take a stand against the evil of the Demiplane of Dread.

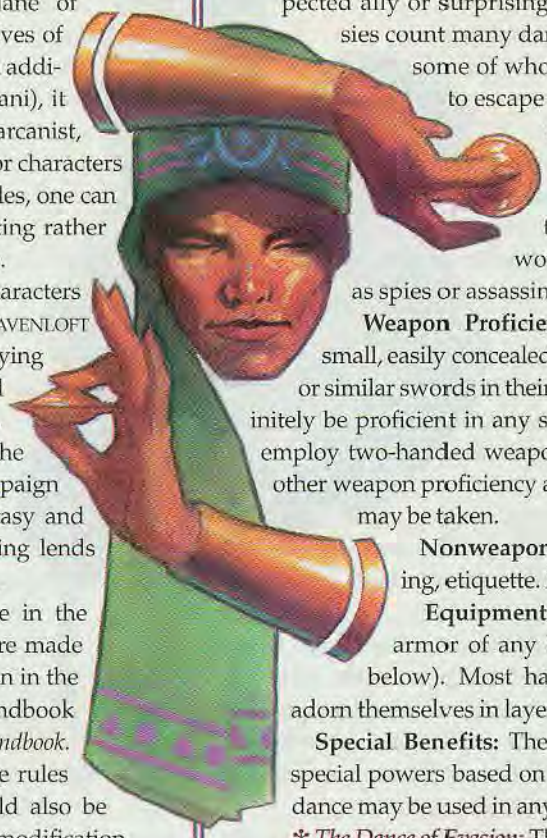
BY OWEN K.C. STEPHENS

ILLUSTRATED BY
D. ALEXANDER GREGORY

The *Domains of Dread* campaign setting adds a new level to roleplaying characters in the Demiplane of Dread by offering rules for creating natives of the Land of the Mists as player characters. In addition to the new race of giomorgo (half-Vistani), it provides four new classes (avenger, arcanist, anchorite, and gypsy) that are appropriate for characters native to the Demiplane. Thanks to these rules, one can start a campaign within the RAVENLOFT setting rather than send characters there from other worlds.

Further expansion on the idea of native characters is available in *Champions of the Mists*, a RAVENLOFT accessory that presents excellent roleplaying notes and has over a dozen new kits designed specifically for the Demiplane of Dread. Even these excellent sources just scratch the surface of possible characters in this campaign world. The unique blend of medieval fantasy and gothic horror found in the RAVENLOFT setting lends itself to hundreds of possible character types.

Here are six new kits designed for use in the RAVENLOFT setting. All assume characters are made using the nonweapon proficiency rules given in the *Player's Handbook* and the Complete Handbook series, particularly *The Complete Ranger's Handbook*. Although these kits are designed to use the rules presented in *Domains of Dread*, they should also be usable in a standard AD&D game with little modification.



Danseur

The danseur (feminine form: danseuse) is a professional dancer, an entertainer who has mastered the intricacies of motion, form, and rhythm. Much like a poet or musician, a danseur makes his living through public performances. A good danseur is a rarity, and watching one can be a mesmerizing and unforgettable experience. Commoners and lords alike receive the news of a new danseur's arrival with joy, and nobles often call upon danseurs to give command performances.

Most danseurs make their living purely from the performance of their art, but a few use their talents as an excuse for travel and access to the powerful and wealthy. Many of these danseurs are truly brave souls, allying themselves to adventurers who oppose dark forces. Others seek only to improve their dancing skills and see adventuring as an opportunity to learn new rhythms and themes to use in their art.

Class/Race: Bards, gypsies, and thieves may all be danseurs. Additionally, a half-Vistani of any class may be a danseur.

Requirements: A danseur must have a minimum Dexterity of 15 and a minimum Charisma of 14. He may be of any alignment.

Role: As a PC, a danseur can be useful in gaining information and access to guarded places. Even vampires and werewolves can crave entertainment, and nobles of these sorts often invite danseurs into their homes. The danseur can also distract a powerful foe, thus aiding in an ambush or buying comrades time to escape.

As an NPC, the danseur works well as either an unexpected ally or surprising adversary. Vistani and gypsies count many danseurs among their numbers, some of whom might help a party of PCs to escape a menacing enemy (often for a price). Many evil danseurs care for nothing but the opportunity to dance, and they might well be found working for a powerful villain as spies or assassins.

Weapon Proficiencies: Most danseurs prefer small, easily concealed weapons. A few use scimitars or similar swords in their dancing, and they would definitely be proficient in any such weapon. Danseurs never employ two-handed weapons, bows, or crossbows. Any other weapon proficiency allowed by the danseur's class may be taken.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* Dancing, etiquette. *Recommended*: Tumbling.

Equipment: Danseurs almost never wear armor of any kind (see special hindrances, below). Most have tightly fitted clothing or adorn themselves in layers of flowing scarves and silk.

Special Benefits: The danseur has access to three special powers based on his ability to dance. Only one dance may be used in any given round.

❇ *The Dance of Evasion:* This swift, twisting dance sends the danseur into a chaotic series of acrobatic flips and quick spins. This grants him a –4 AC bonus with a successful dancing proficiency check, although the danseur may take no other actions other than movement while doing this.

❇ *The Sword Dance:* Despite its name, this special ability may be used with any single one-handed weapon with which the danseur is proficient. By engaging in a series of fast spins and flips while holding his weapon, the danseur may make an attack with a +2 bonus. Only one attack each round may benefit from this bonus.

❇ *The Dance of Beguilement:* This slow, sensuous dance is full of graceful, complex movements. Those watching it must make a save vs. death magic or be so enwrapped in the dance that they are incapable of any action other than watching the danseur. This power can be used only on creatures who are not engaged in combat and who are looking at the danseur. Any attack on a beguiled creature instantly ends this effect. The danseur may not take any other action while using the beguiling dance.

In addition to these special abilities, the danseur gains +1 to his dancing proficiency every three levels (+1 at 3rd, 6th, 9th, etc.).

Special Hindrances: Danseurs hate to be hindered in their movements, and as a result most avoid armor of any kind. A danseur who does find himself in armor in some unusual circumstance is unable to use any of the special benefits of this kit and loses 2 points of AC, due to his unfamiliarity with armor.

A danseur must spend at least three hours practicing dance every day. If this practice is missed, the danseur temporarily loses all special benefits of this kit. The danseur does not

regain the kit's special benefits until he has practiced for twice as many days as he missed.

Wealth Options: A danseur starts with 2d6 more gold than is normal for his character class.

Dilettante

Dilettantes are members of the lesser nobility or wealthy merchant classes who have failed to devote their time seriously to any one pursuit. Instead, the dilettante dabbles in numerous pursuits and even magical studies, gaining a little skill in many areas but mastering none of them. Since this kind of leisurely life is usually possible only in realms with fairly high levels of cultural development (chivalric or renaissance), dilettantes are most commonly from Borca, Dementlieu, Invidia, Lamordia, Mordent, Nosos, or Richemulot.

The chief motivations of the dilettante are boredom, a desire to be excited, and an urge to see more of the world. Although many dilettantes are fops and wastrels, some are simply people who lack the patience or vision to dedicate themselves to a single pursuit. They can still be worthwhile people and friends, despite their less than serious natures.

Class/Race: No avenger, gypsy, paladin, priest, or psionicist character may be a dilettante. All other classes and races are allowed, although most dilettantes are humans or halflings.

Requirements: A dilettante may be of any alignment, but most are chaotic in nature.

Role: Although a dilettante PC is not a master of any particular skill, his broad experience in many different fields can help a party. A dilettante can also be useful to a party in gaining access to nobles or other members of the upper class. Dilettantes are often invited to parties or are honored guests of a local lord. Unlike a knight or greater noble, a dilettante cannot demand shelter of other nobles, but he is often invited to stay anyway.

A dilettante ally can be useful for a DM who does not want an overpowering NPC. Arrogant and haughty dilettantes can also serve as useful opponents for low-level PC groups. More foolish or foppish dilettantes can occasionally provide comic relief if a DM wishes to lighten the mood of a game.

Weapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* None. *Recommended:* Fast, one-handed weapons such as the saber or rapier, but a dilletante may choose any weapon allowed by his class.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* Etiquette, read/write. *Recommended:* Any. Also see special benefits.

Equipment: A dilettante prefers high quality equipment and fashionable clothes. Thus a dilettante always seeks items of superior quality, spending 10% more than the listed price for everything he buys. He pays this additional amount even for items not actually worth the additional cost. Appearances must be maintained, after all.

Special Benefits: As members of the upper class, dilettantes are well treated by most commoners and minor nobles, and they gain a +1 reaction bonus from such people.

Because of their broad areas of interest, dilettantes may buy nonweapon proficiencies from any category. They never need pay additional slots for purchasing proficiencies outside their normal categories. Additionally, a dilettante may buy two nonweapon proficiencies for the price of one; if he does so, however, the check for each of these proficiencies is at half of its normal value.

Dilettantes even dabble in the arcane arts, although they never master them. Dilettantes of non-spellcasting classes gain the ability to cast one first-level wizard spell for every two full levels (one spell at 2nd level, two at 4th, etc.), though they are limited just as wizards in the maximum number of spells learned. However, since the dilettante does not fully understand the magical forces he summons, he must make a successful Intelligence check every time he tries to cast a spell. A failed Intelligence check results in a failed spell at best, or possibly even a twisted spell effect that works against the dilettante (at the DM's discretion). A dilettante cannot cast spells when in armor of any kind.

A dilettante whose class grants him access to spells normally (such as a bard or wizard) does not gain any additional spell memorizations. Instead, he has access to a school of magic normally outside his abilities (such as Abjuration for an illusionist or wild magic for a bard). Whenever attempting to cast a spell from this school, the dilettante must make an Intelligence check at –1 per level of the spell. A failed check still indicates a miscast or badly twisted spell effect. The DM has final say over what additional schools are available to a dilettante.

Special Hindrances: Dilettantes suffer –2 penalties to all fear, horror, and madness checks. Because they lack the ambition to study anything in depth, dilettantes may never spend any proficiency slots on improving a nonweapon proficiency and suffer a –1 penalty to all nonweapon proficiency checks. A dilettante may also never specialize in weapons or fighting styles, regardless of his class. Dilettantes never gain an experience bonus for high ability scores and, in fact, suffer a –10% penalty to all experience gained, due to their lack of discipline or drive.

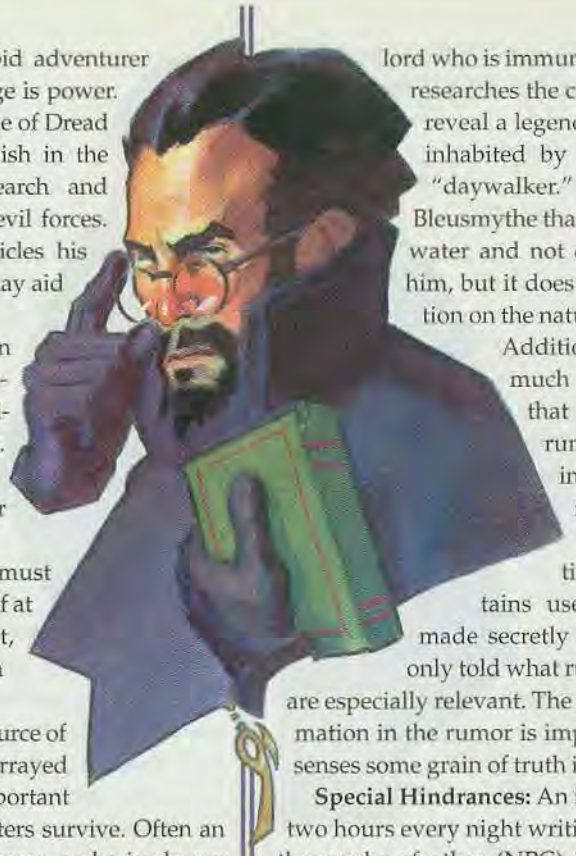
Wealth Options: All dilettantes begin play with (3d6 + 6) × 10 gp.

Investigator

The investigator follows in the footsteps of that famous champion of light, Dr. Van Richten. Although few investigators ever experience the success of that good doctor, they are dedicated to the same principle: to seek out creatures of darkness and determine fact from fable.

Investigators research every imaginable rumor and old wives' tale to gather information on creatures of the night. They are masters of research and analytical methodology, sifting through legends and gossip to chart the strengths and weaknesses of the creatures they seek. The investigator is not

simply a scholar but rather an intrepid adventurer who knows all too well that knowledge is power. To face the dark forces of the Demiplane of Dread with no idea of their powers is foolish in the extreme. The investigator sees research and thought as his best weapons against evil forces. The investigator also carefully chronicles his travels and findings so that his work may aid others long after he is gone.



Class/Race: Any class other than avenger may be an investigator. Arcanists and wizards are frequently investigators, as are anchorites and priests. Any race may take this kit, although most are human, gnomish, elven, or half-elven.

Requirements: An investigator must have Intelligence and Wisdom scores of at least 13. Most are of good alignment, but a few evil investigators have been known to exist.

Role: As a PC, the investigator is a source of valuable knowledge about the forces arrayed against a party. He can provide important warnings and clues to help the characters survive. Often an investigator provides direction for a game, as he is always seeking to gather more knowledge and must travel far and wide to acquire it. An investigator is also often a leader, or at least a trusted advisor to an adventuring party. Whenever a DM has lore he wishes an adventuring party to learn, he can have it be discovered by an investigator in the course of his regular research.

As an NPC, an investigator can be an excellent ally or hook to introduce characters to an adventure. An evil investigator is most likely to use the party as bait or as a distraction, hoping to learn about a monster by watching it destroy the PCs. If the PCs are themselves unusual, an evil (or misguided) NPC investigator might seek to study or even destroy them.

Weapon Proficiencies: The investigator may use any weapons normally allowed by his character class.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* Read/write, local history. *Recommended:* Ancient history.

Equipment: Investigators almost always have writing materials for keeping notes. They also usually have several rare books written by other investigators. An investigator begins play with two such tomes.

Special Benefits: Because of his extensive research and study, an investigator has a chance of knowing some lore about any supernatural or magical creature. The chance is 1% per level of the investigator that he knows something off the top of his head, and 5% per level that he can find information after eight hours of studying his books.

The exact information gained is up to the DM but is usually in the form of ancient legends or the obscure ramblings of madmen, rather than carefully organized data. For example, the investigator Reginald Bleusmythe has decided to investigate an old, abandoned castle. Unbeknownst to Bleusmythe, the castle is inhabited by a powerful vampire lord who is immune to the effects of sunlight. If he researches the castle, a successful lore roll may reveal a legend describing the castle as being inhabited by an undead creature called a "daywalker." This information warns Bleusmythe that he should bring plenty of holy water and not depend on sunlight to protect him, but it does not give him specific information on the nature of his opponent.

Additionally, investigators spend so much time sorting fact from fiction that they begin to identify useful rumors by instinct. Whenever an investigator hears a local legend, fable, or rumor, he has a 5% chance per level of instinctively knowing whether it contains useful information. This roll is made secretly by the DM, and the player is only told what rumors, if any, his character feels are especially relevant. The player is never told what information in the rumor is important, only that the character senses some grain of truth in it.

Special Hindrances: An investigator must spend at least two hours every night writing his own notes and studying the works of other (NPC) investigators. Failure to do so results in loss of the kit's special benefits until study and writing can again be undertaken. Additionally, the investigator must have at least one book of lore available for each level he has achieved. If the investigator does not have enough books, his percentile rolls for lore and rumor identification are based on the number of books available to him, rather than his true level.

Investigators are feared and hated by many of the evil forces of the Demiplane of Dread, and they constantly run the risk of being killed by the very creatures they seek to study. A DM should be sure to make this risk clear to the player of an investigator by occasionally having creatures attack the adventuring party with the investigator as their primary target.

Wealth Options: The investigator starts with the amount of wealth normally allowed for his character class.

Psychologue

The psychologue is a person trained and experienced in the functions and possible illnesses of the mind. Many psychologues are professional doctors who have learned their craft after years of study at an institution of higher learning. Others are independent scholars who have taken an interest in the workings of the mind. Rarely, a particularly insightful person might naturally develop the skills needed to be a psychologue, such as a gypsy wanderer or even a particularly attentive bartender.

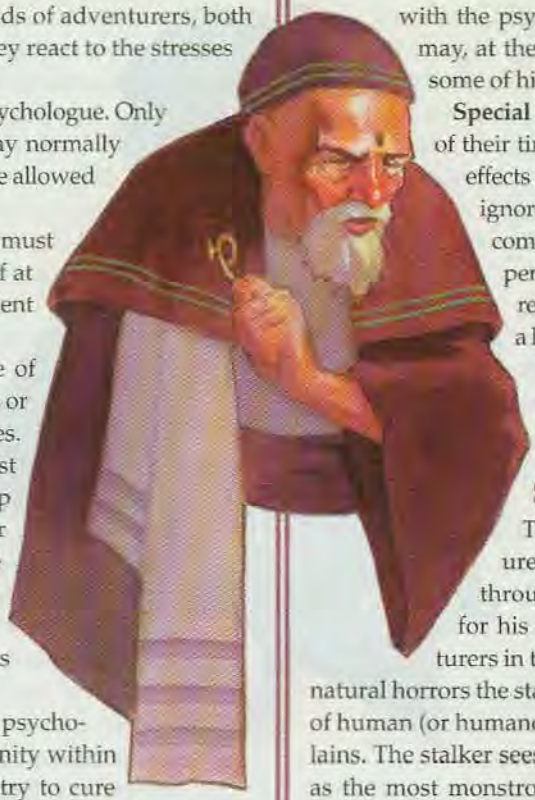
Typical professional psychologues spend their lives in asylums or hospitals studying those poor unfortunates who have been driven mad by the horrors of the Demiplane of Dread. Others believe the only way to truly understand the workings of the mind is to observe normal mentalities, especially how they react in extreme situations.

These psychologues often join bands of adventurers, both to aid them and to observe how they react to the stresses adventuring brings.

Class/Race: Any race may be a psychologue. Only wizards, priests, and psionicists may normally take this kit. Gypsies or bards may be allowed this kit at the DM's discretion.

Requirements: A psychologue must have an Intelligence and Wisdom of at least 12. He may be of any alignment allowed by his class.

Role: A PC psychologue can be of great help to any group of explorers or hunters of supernatural creatures. The psychologue's power to resist corruption and madness can help keep a party from straying too far into the darkness of Ravenloft. The psychologue may also gain access to places other adventurers aren't normally welcome, such as asylums and sanitariums.



As an NPC ally or hireling, a psychologue may help PCs retain their sanity within the Demiplane of Dread, or even try to cure those who have gone mad. An evil NPC psychologue might attempt to drive the PCs mad so that he may observe their reactions. A good example of this kind of villain is Dr. Daclaud Heinfroth, the darklord of Dominia. (For details, see the boxed campaign *Bleak House*.)

Weapon Proficiencies: Psychologues may take any weapon proficiencies normally allowed by their character classes.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* Fast talking, intimidation (both from the *Complete Thief's Handbook*). *Recommended:* Any Charisma-based NWP.

Equipment: Psychologues may use any equipment normally allowed by their character classes.

Special Benefits: The psychologue's keen perceptions and understanding of subtle psychological clues allows him to identify falsehoods and dementia more accurately than most. A psychologue has a 5% chance per level of identifying someone with a mental disorder just by speaking with him. This rises to 10% per level if the psychologue has the opportunity to converse with a subject for several hours uninterrupted. The psychologue also has a 50% chance to know when someone of lower level is consciously lying. The psychologue does not know the exact nature of the lie, and this ability never works on creature of higher level or more hit dice than the psychologue.

A psychologue is protected from many forms of insanity by his strong understanding of such ailments. This provides a +2 bonus to any madness checks, as well as to saves vs. any spell or power that causes or simulates insanity. Additionally, the psychologue may help others who have themselves fallen victims to madness. An insane character who spends at least a week talking to the psychologue every day is allowed to make a saving throw vs. spells to regain his sanity for 2d6 days. If the character remains in close contact with the psychologue for long periods of time he may, at the DM's option, actually regain at least some of his sanity permanently.

Special Hindrances: Psychologues spend most of their time and effort studying abstract mental effects and conditions. As a result, they tend to ignore training in physical pursuits, such as combat. Psychologues suffer a –1 attack penalty with all weapons and never receive bonuses to their hit points due to a high Constitution score.

Wealth Options: The psychologue starts with the amount of wealth normally allowed for his character class.

Stalker

The stalker is a lone and enigmatic figure who spends most of his time hunting through back alleys and run-down taverns for his chosen enemies. Unlike most adventurers in the Demiplane of Dread, it's not supernatural horrors the stalker seeks but the more common evils of human (or humanoid, or demihuman) criminals and villains. The stalker sees thieves, murderers, and other felons as the most monstrous creatures exactly *because* they are human beings who have chosen to prey on the innocent and weak. To catch such outlaws requires determination and skill, and it is to this pursuit that a stalker dedicates himself.

Most stalkers are good people who believe they must seek out evil criminals so that others may be safe. They have seen lawbreakers escape justice one time too many and have thus vowed to take matters into their own hands. Some stalkers have suffered a terrible tragedy at the hands of criminals, losing their parents or loved ones to malefactors who were never brought to trial. But in hunting down the worst society has to offer, the stalker has come to look and act much like a criminal himself. Stalkers are often humorless, dark, driven individuals obsessed with their desire to bring criminals to justice.

Class/Race: Any class or race may take the stalker kit, but it is particularly appropriate for arcanists, rangers, and thieves. Most stalkers are human or half-elven.

Requirements: A stalker must have a Wisdom of at least 13. He may be of any alignment, though few are lawful.

Role: A stalker PC is a benefit to any adventuring party, although many see him as a mixed blessing. While the skills and information provided by a stalker can be of great benefit to a party, stalkers are also often targets of the people they hunt and can bring unwanted attention to adventurers. They are also usually more concerned with the success of their quest than the well-being of their comrades. Even good-aligned stalkers often see the loss of friends and family to be an unfortunate but necessary price to pay for the good they do.

An evil stalker NPC is one who has surrendered entirely to his obsession and cares for nothing except for his revenge on criminals everywhere. Such a stalker would make a danger-

ous and resourceful enemy who could interact with the PCs in many ways. He might choose to recruit an adventuring party to aid him in apprehending a particularly dangerous criminal, or he might use them as bait to draw out his chosen target. Even worse, he might be employed by some other adversary who has declared the PCs to be outlaws.

Weapon Proficiencies: A stalker may use any weapon normally allowed by his character class. Most stalkers conceal at least one or two small weapons in their clothing for emergencies.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: If not a ranger, the stalker gains tracking as a bonus NWP and suffers only half the normal non-ranger penalty to the skill check. If the stalker is a ranger, he gains a +1 bonus to his tracking skill.

Equipment: A stalker may use any equipment normally allowed by his character class. A stalker's clothing, armor, and gear is always dark and plain, designed both to help conceal the stalker from the prying eyes of his enemies and to give him an imposing, fearful appearance. (See special benefits and hindrances, below.)

Special Benefits: The stalker has learned that, to find and capture criminals and miscreants, it is necessary to learn their villainous ways. Stalkers study the criminal underworld and its inhabitants carefully, until they gain an instinctive understanding of how the scum that inhabit it work and think.

To remain unseen while studying or searching for their prey, all stalkers have a chance to hide in shadows, as the thief ability. Unlike the standard thief ability, a stalker's hide in shadows ability works equally well in both urban and wilderness settings. For characters who are not thieves or rangers, this skill starts at 20% and rises 5% per level after first to a maximum of 90%. For ranger and thief stalkers, there is no bonus to their percentage to hide in shadows; instead, they gain the ability to use both hide in shadows and move silently equally well in wilderness and urban settings.

Because of their highly tuned instincts, stalkers may use their tracking NWP at full value in both wilderness and urban settings (see *The Complete Ranger's Handbook*, page 14, for rules on how to handle tracking in non-natural surroundings) when tracking a set of human or humanoid tracks.

A stalker's fearsome appearance and reputation may assist him when dealing with members of the criminal element. A stalker may attempt to intimidate a known criminal with coercion, threats, or a disheartening glare. If the criminal is of lower level than the stalker, such an effort forces the scoundrel to save vs. paralyzation or be struck with *fear* (as the fourth-level wizard spell). If a criminal under the effects of *fear* is incapable of fleeing, he is likely to throw himself on the mercy of the stalker, offering information or assistance in return for his freedom. Of course, such offers are rarely sincere, and the stalker is well advised to take advantage of them quickly, before the criminal regains his wits.

Finally, a stalker's familiarity with lawbreakers is so great that he has a small chance of recognizing a criminal on sight. Whenever a stalker meets a criminal, there is a 2% chance per level that the stalker recognizes him. This allows the stalker to know the offender's name, a list of his crimes, and information about where the criminal is wanted. Obviously this ability works only on individuals who are at least suspected of crimes by some local law enforcement group (usually a city guard).

Special Hindrances: The dark dress and mood of a stalker often makes him seem at least as frightening and evil as those he hunts. Although those who know a stalker well might realize that these trapping are the tools he uses in his never-ending quest for justice, those who meet a stalker for the first time are likely to come to the wrong conclusion about the dark, brooding figure. Thus a stalker suffers a –3 penalty to all initial reaction rolls.

A stalker is always on the move, never staying in any one place for more than a few weeks. This wandering is caused by the stalker's own caution, for should he remain in any one place for long, he is bound to attract the attention of thieves' guilds and other criminal organizations. If for no other reason than to protect those innocent bystanders who might be caught up in an attack from such a group, the stalker always makes certain he never becomes too comfortable or stays too long in one locale. The stalker is also driven by the knowledge that somewhere, some criminal is escaping justice. Unable to bear this thought, the stalker soon leaves any tranquil setting in search of more villains to catch. This is an important limitation on the stalker, and the DM should be sure to enforce it fully.

The stalker's primary dedication is to capture and punish lawbreaking miscreants. Once a stalker has set out to capture a particular criminal, he does not rest until after the hunt is complete. If circumstances make it obvious the stalker must leave such an undertaking until later, then he may make a saving throw vs. spells to bring himself to abandon his quarry. Even if this roll is successful, the stalker is so agitated by his unfinished business that he suffers a –2 penalty to all rolls for 2–5 weeks.

Wealth Options: The stalker starts with the amount of wealth normally allowed by his character class, but he must spend all but 2–12 gold on weapons, armor, and equipment.

Warder

Warders are brave and strong-hearted souls who act as protectors and bodyguards to others. Most warders are paid professionals who hire their services out to those nobles and wealthy merchants who can afford them. In the dangerous realms of the Demiplane of Dread, there is no shortage of work and renown for these specialized mercenaries. Few warders are interested in fame or fortune, however, instead seeing the safety of friends and innocents as sufficient reward for their services. All warders are skilled guardians trained to place the well-being of those they protect, their charges, above their own concerns.

Good-aligned warders are trustworthy friends and steadfast allies, often considering it their duty to look after those who are weaker or less fortunate than themselves even when not hired to do so. Neutral warders are mostly concerned with getting their job done and often have few or no close acquaintances. Evil warders are ruthlessly mercenary, selling their services to the highest bidder and protecting their charges only as much as is required by the letter of their contracts.

Class/Race: Only fighter and priest classes may be warders. No race is barred from this kit, but most warders are human.

Requirements: A warder must be of lawful alignment.

Role: As a PC, a warder can be hired by specific members of an adventuring party, or he might volunteer his services to help a good cause or watch over a close friend. Because of his strong concerns for others, a warder often fits into a team better than some other character types. A warder should always be keeping an eye on his charge and may also watch out for the weaker members of a party. The warder's keen alertness and resistance to fear, horror, and madness makes him of great benefit to any group that adventures in the domains of Ravenloft, or in any frightening and dangerous place.

As an NPC, a warder can be a useful ally for adventurers. Despite usually being a powerful hero, an NPC warder won't steal the glory of the PCs, instead spending his efforts to ensure the safety of those he is paid to protect. Since warders are generally concerned only with defending someone, they do not make good primary antagonists. However, a major villain might well have a hired warder of his own, who the PCs would then have to deal with.

Weapon Proficiencies: The warder may use any weapons normally allowed by his character class.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* Alertness. *Recommended:* Healing.

Equipment: Warders often carry shields to help them protect their charges.

Special Benefits: The special benefits available to warders are applicable only when they have charges. A warder may have only one charge at a time, and it is usually someone the warder has been hired to protect for a specific mission or period of time. A warder may decide to make someone a charge without being paid to do so, but the warder's player must inform the DM of this as soon as the decision is made.

To be a successful guardian in the lands of the Mists, a warder's constant vigilance over his charge is maintained even at an instinctive level, allowing a warder to sense when his charge is threatened even when there is no obvious evidence of the threat. Whenever a warder's charge is in serious danger, such as when he is about to be attacked, set off a trap, ingest a poisonous food, or even fall into a pit, the warder is allowed to make a saving throw vs. paralyzation. On a successful save, the warder is aware of a strong danger to his charge. This sense occurs no more than one round before the danger strikes the charge and may give as little as a fraction of a second's warning (at the DM's discretion). The warder never knows the exact nature of the threat, nor do his instincts warn him of a threat to anyone but his charge. This ability borders on the supernatural and is not something the warder can explain or teach to others.

Also, a warder's brave defense of his charge allows him to ignore his own fear as long as his charge is within sight. This makes the warder immune to fear, horror, and madness checks as well as magical *fear* effects while with his charge. Only if he is separated from his charge can the warder's courage fail him, in which case he makes all fear, horror, and madness checks normally.

Because a warder is trained to protect his charge even at the risk of his own life, a warder may use his shield to protect his charge as long as the charge is within 5 feet. This grants the charge the normal AC benefits of a shield but prevents the warder from gaining any benefits from the shield. If the warder does not have a shield but has an AC of at least 7, he may use his body to protect the charge. This grants the charge an AC bonus of 2 but penalizes the warder's AC by 3. If the warder's AC is worse than 7, he cannot effectively protect his charge well enough to grant an AC bonus.

Special Hindrances: The warder never willingly leaves a charge he has sworn to protect, no matter how great the odds against him. If a warder sees that a charge is in serious danger, the warder attempts to move him to safety, even if the charge does not wish to go. If a warder ever willingly leaves a charge in danger, he immediately and permanently loses all benefits of this kit.

Additionally, if a warder's charge is kidnapped, killed, or lost, the warder blames himself. If the charge is merely missing, or his fate is unknown, the warder suffers a –1 penalty to all rolls until his charge is recovered. Witnessing the death of someone under his protection, however, forces a warder to make a horror check. Additionally, the warder falls into a deep depression that places him at a –2 penalty to all his rolls for 1–6 weeks.

Wealth Options: A warder starts with the amount of wealth normally allowed by his character class.

Owen Stephens is a freelance writer and alumni of the 1998 TSR Writer's Workshop. He lives in Norman, OK with his lovely wife/editor and four borrowed cats. This is his second article for DRAGON Magazine.

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Most maladies common to the Prime Material Plane can be remedied using simple spells or potions. These common debilitations pale in comparison to the more virulent contagions found on the Outer Planes.

by
Kevin Melka

illustrated by Bob Klasnich

PLANAR PESTILENCE

While a *cure disease* spell might solve worries back on the Prime, many of the wicked ailments encountered in the PLANESCAPE® campaign are curiously (and painfully) resistant to this spell. Because of this, some deities have passed along more powerful curative spells to help their faithful combat these vicious diseases.

Cause & Cure

An experienced cutter with a pocket full of jink can find or buy a *cure disease* spell just about anywhere outside of the Inner Planes. Given some of the places adventurers go in search of a challenge, certain precautions need to be taken to ensure survival. However, priests and paladins who have faced afflictions on the Outer Planes have found their magical curatives lacking. The old standby—the *cure disease* spell—can no longer be considered a cure-all, and a paladin's immunity to diseases cannot protect him from many of the horrible afflictions found on Baator, Acheron, and other unsavory planes. A more powerful version of the *cure disease* spell, *cure greater disease*, was created to stem the threat of these powerful diseases across the multiverse.

For purposes of casting, *cure greater disease* is considered a sixth-level priest spell. All spell statistics (range, casting time, duration, etc.) are the same as the *cure disease* spell. Unlike its third-level counterpart, however, *cure greater disease* has the power to wipe clean almost any planar infection.

Malevolent deities often provide their priests with the reverse of this spell, *cause greater disease*, allowing them to inflict these horrible planar maladies upon others. Saving throws against this version of the spell suffer a –2 penalty.

What follows are several new afflictions to plague your planar heroes:

Abyssal Rot

Heroes who neglect to treat or dress their wounds are prime candidates for abyssal rot. This disease is common on planar layers where war and death are commonplace. Limbs afflicted with abyssal rot eventually become gangrenous, leaving a sod with few options outside of powerful magical curing or amputation. The most common occurrence of abyssal rot comes from injuries received by tanar'ri, baatezu, and rotting undead. Any character wounded in battle with such creatures who fails to address his wounds within 24 hours must make a system shock roll to avoid contracting the disease within 1d10+2 hours.

The affected body part, usually a limb, loses feeling, becomes cold, and turns progressively darker in color as it begins to decompose. There are two forms of abyssal rot, dry and moist, and both can be eliminated only with a *cure greater disease* or *wish* spell.

Dry abyssal rot occurs when a cutter's arteries are blocked and the tissues around the wound gradually become bloodless. Left untreated, the flesh surrounding the wound turns black as it begins to rot. Flaking skin quickly leads to small chunks falling off; after 2d10 turns of infection, the limb becomes useless. The abyssal rot spreads at an alarming rate, consuming the extremity in 1d4 days. If the disease is not cured, the infection spreads throughout the body, incapacitating the character immediately and killing the character in 1d4+1 days.

Also called zombie rot (because of the putrid discharge), moist abyssal rot follows contamination of an injury with dirt or other infected matter. The victim's temperature rises sharply after onset, followed by great pain in the extremity (–3 to all rolls), acute anemia, and fatigue. Moist abyssal rot is fatal if left untreated for longer than 24 hours.

In both forms, abyssal rot kills body tissues, for all purposes "killing" the extremity. Even *regeneration* cannot restore the dead tissue to life. *Wish* or *limited wish* can restore the limb, but only after amputation and complete elimination of the disease.

Astral Mold

Popping through portal after portal can be a cutter's greatest thrill, but there are hidden hazards to planehopping the average character doesn't take into consideration. Astral mold is a fancy name for a bacteria that can contaminate a hero's food rations as he travels across the multiverse. Most are in the dark about where astral mold comes from or how to deal with it, but some have heard a story or two about its effects and take proper precautions.

Exposure to astral mold may eventually befall any planewalking character. This bacterial spore presumably originates in the Astral Plane (hence its name) and can seemingly pass through solid objects to attach itself to a character's food supplies. It is invisible to the naked eye but detectable by magic (*detect poison* spells), even as it germinates in food, water, or other provisions. Spells such as *purify food & drink* or *cure disease* are effective only until the mold is ingested. Astral mold can only affect a person if he eats the contaminated food, but once the food is eaten, only a *cure greater disease* or *wish* spell can cure the character of the affliction. A character can resist astral mold infection by making a successful system shock roll at –10%. (The DM can negate the penalty if only a small amount of food is consumed.)

The first symptoms of astral mold consumption appear 1d6 hours after failure to make the system shock roll. The toxin in the mold is not destroyed by stomach acids or natural resistance (including magic resistance) and eventually attacks the victim's central nervous system. Within the first hour of succumbing to the infection, the victim begins to have trouble walking (movement rate reduced by half) and suffers from impaired vision (–2 to attack rolls) and debilitated speech (no casting spells with verbal components). This is followed 1d4 hours later by severe muscle convulsions (–4 on all attack rolls, saving throws, ability scores, and proficiency

checks). Within 1d12 hours after succumbing to convulsions, the character must save vs. poison at –2. If the save succeeds, the character recovers after 2d6+12 hours. If the save fails, the victim begins suffocating as a result of respiratory paralysis; after a number of rounds equal to one-third his Constitution score (rounded down), the victim dies unless a *cure greater disease* or *wish* spell is cast. Even if the save is made or the proper curative magic is cast, the poor sod experiences violent episodes of fever and vomiting similar to food poisoning.

Certain herbalists in Sigil and the Outlands claim to have concocted natural cures for astral mold, but these so-called cures are probably shams devised by peelers taking advantage of the doomed.

Beastland Fever

The planes have their own version of malaria called Beastland fever. Any nonmagical creature on the planes can contract Beastland fever, but for some reason the stinging insects of the Beastlands prefer humanoids over other species. (Must be something in the blood!)

Like malaria, Beastland fever is transmitted via the bite of various bugs on tropical and subtropical planes and layers. Contrary to its name, Beastland fever is not limited to the Beastlands, although it seems likely that the disease originated there. Open one portal, and a character could inadvertently send a swarm of fever-carrying insects anywhere in the multiverse. Spells and salves that ward off common insects are ideal for holding these infected bugs at bay.

Anyone bitten by the infected insects must make a system shock roll. Those who fail their roll begin to produce heavy amounts of inert matter in their blood after 1d6 hours, resulting in high fever and delirium (–4 to all attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, and proficiency checks). This can lead to death in untreated cases and, at the very least, causes the fever to reappear again without warning, usually within 1d6+1 days. There are two forms of Beastland fever: jungle and quartan.

Jungle Beastland fever occurs primarily in tropical regions and is responsible for most of the deaths from this malady. Symptoms of jungle Beastland fever appear within 1d6 hours after infection. As the inert matter spreads through the victim's blood, it blocks blood vessels to the brain, producing hallucinations and seizures. If left untreated, the victim must make another system shock roll at –10%. If the roll fails, death occurs in 2d6+6 hours. If the roll succeeds, the fever passes in 1d6 hours but reappears without warning 1d6+1 days later. This fever can be cured at any time by a *cure greater disease* or *wish* spell.

Quartan Beastland fever has a longer incubation period (1d4+9 days) and is less deadly. This affliction is commonly spread in subtropical regions, producing a high fever that incapacitates the victim every other day, during which time the high fever and delirium imposes a –4 modifier on all attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, and proficiency checks. After 10 days, the victim must make a system shock roll; if successful, the fever breaks and the victim recovers. If the roll fails, the disease mutates, becoming the more serious jungle Beastland fever.

In both cases, casting *cure disease* cures the fever for 1d6+1 days, after which it returns with the same symptoms. *Cure greater disease* eliminates the inert matter completely but leaves the victim sleepy for 1d4 days (–2 to all rolls; no strenuous activity or spellcasting allowed).

Fading Breath

Few things on the planes are scarier than the thought of a dead god, except maybe whatever killed the god in the first place. Not counting the powers who were slain during Toril's Time of Troubles, most dead gods had been put in the dead book so long ago even the oldest proxy has trouble remembering how or why it happened. The one thing dead evil gods have in common is the fading breath.

It's said that when an evil Power dies, its last exhaled breath lives on forever to plague the plane it once called home. Given the infinite vastness of the planes, a blood's chances of encountering a fading breath are slim. Nevertheless, every so often tales are told of a putrid wind sweeping over someone, who later turns up covered in bloody boils, a look of horror burned into his dead face. Even "immortal" beings such as archons and aasimon are not immune to this ancient gust from the grave.

The fading breath is a slow moving gale (5–10 mph) that smells worse than the most rotten corpse. A fading breath sweeps over someone, and a few minutes later signs of an unknown pestilence appear. The disease is evident by bloody, discharging boils that form within 1d6 turns (–2 penalties to Charisma and attack rolls). This is followed by convulsions and respiratory distress (–4 to all rolls), with death occurring in 1d4+1 hours unless the hero receives miraculous treatment in the form of a *cure greater disease spell* cast by a priest of the dead god's alignment or a *wish* spell. A *limited wish* spell can arrest the effects for 1d6 days.

The fading breath is not contagious and affects beings at random, afflicting some while having no effect on others. To determine who is affected, each character who feels the fading breath must make a system shock roll. Those with the same alignment as the dead god receive a +15% bonus to the roll. Those with similar ethics or morals receive a +5% bonus to the roll. The fading breath can only exist on the god's native plane. It is unknown whether those who perished elsewhere were able to leave behind such a scourge.

Those who fail their system shock roll succumb to the affliction, while those who succeed do not. Those slain by the fading breath are forever dead, as the disease completely obliterates the victim's spirit along with the body. Such victims cannot be *raised, resurrected,* or *reincarnated.* Not even a *wish* spell can restore the victim at this point.

Parched Mouth

Heroes who don't learn to properly pack a lunch when transgressing the planes can fall victim to parched mouth. Not all tasty morsels found can be eaten, even after thorough cooking and purifying magic. Even the food in a character's backpack can become a catalyst for this affliction.

Parched mouth comes from the consumption of contaminated food or water. How the food becomes spoiled varies—continued exposure to air or contaminated water, the touch of a fiend, larva, or undead creature, or any other unclean situation a blood may happen across. Sometimes, the bacteria can be cured

using a *purify food & water* spell, but 25% of the parched mouth bacteria encountered on the Outer Planes are especially virulent and resistant to such magic. If examined closely, food infected by the disease appears to have a purplish tinge. Despoiled water or wine has a bland, almost dry texture that leaves a cutter wanting more.

Characters are entitled to a system shock roll to avoid infection, but the DM should apply a –20% penalty if abundant contaminated food or drink is consumed. Symptoms of parched mouth manifest within 1d10 turns and include a craving thirst, fierce vomiting, muscle cramps, and circulatory collapse as a result of dehydration. These afflictions result in a –4 penalty to all attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, and proficiency checks. If the symptoms are left untreated, death occurs within 2d6+6 hours. A character who is carefully watched and tended by someone with the healing proficiency does not die but does not improve, either.

A *cure greater disease* spell eradicates parched mouth, while lesser curative magic only delays the symptoms for 2d6 hours. Once cured, the infected character requires 1d4 days of bed rest to fully recover. A hero who overexerts himself before fully recovering must make a new system shock roll or suffer a new case of parched mouth within 1d12+12 hours.

Hive Plague

There are many reasons why Sigil remains an unsafe place to live, notwithstanding the factions and various unscrupulous high-ups. Every so often, for no rhyme or reason, the Hive plague appears. Filth, dirt, and pestilence fill the streets of the Hive, and it's a wonder the whole of Sigil doesn't perish from the plague. Those who know the chant sometimes refer to the Hive plague as the black death. The Hive plague is a cursed disease that can infect everything from visiting primes to resident tanar'ri; it plays no favorites, which has led some to suspect that the Hive plague was created by the Lady of Pain herself.

The Hive plague is an acute, infectious ailment spread by contaminated waste and vermin that riddle the Hive. Cranium rats are thought to be prime carriers for the disease, although they have no immunity. The plague causes blackened, painful nodes to grow on the neck and limbs of the victim. These nodes fill with a black, oozelike substance that devours the blood of the victim. If not cured, the nodes literally suck the blood from the victim's body as they grow.

Characters who spend a month or longer in the Hive Ward must make a system shock roll to avoid contracting the plague. The first symptoms of Hive plague are headache, nausea, vomiting, and a general feeling of ill health. This lasts for 1d12+12 hours and results in a –1 penalty to all rolls and a 15% chance

of spell failure for spellcasters. At the end of that time, the blackened nodes appear and begin to swell. The swelling takes place over 1d6 days, during which time the victim suffers from exhaustion (–2 to all rolls) and cannot regain hit points from natural or magic healing. At the end of this period, the victim must make another system shock roll at –15%. Characters tended by someone with the healing proficiency and who receive the proper bed rest and fluids may negate this penalty.

If the system shock roll succeeds, the victim's symptoms do not worsen, and both the symptoms and the swelling subside. If the system shock roll fails, the victim loses 2d4 hp per day until death occurs.

A *cure greater disease* or *wish* spell removes all infected nodes from a character, but the ordeal leaves him sluggish for 1d4 days. All other lesser magic has no effect on the Hive plague. During severe outbreaks, proxies have a habit of showing up with *cure greater disease* spells, wiping out the plague for months. Problem is, the disease somehow finds its way back into the streets of the Hive.

The chant around the Hive is that someone—or something—is purposely causing the plague. One likely candidate is Ridnir Tetch, head of the Weary Spirit Infirmary. Some say Tetch deliberately injects captured cranium rats with the plague then unleashes them upon the Hive, obsessed with finding a cure for the plague outside the realm of magic. Those who share such "insight" usually end up on Tetch's operating table and are never seen or heard from again.

DM Note: Sigil's Hive Ward is home to many afflictions. Another disease of note is babble fever (q.v., *Faction War*). This highly contagious disease infects poor sods who live in the Hive or deal with Hive-dwellers on a regular basis. The affliction is characterized by a rapid onset time. Within 1d4 hours of catching babble fever, the victim is struck stupid. His Intelligence drops to 3, and he is unable to speak articulately, transforming into a blathering idiot for 1d4 days, after which time he dies unless properly ministered.

Characters can contract babble fever just by speaking to or passing within 5 feet of someone afflicted with the malady. Characters who fail a system shock roll succumb to the disease. Unlike the other diseases in this article, however, babble fever can be cured with a common *cure disease* spell cast by a priest of at least 9th level, at which time the victim's Intelligence and capacity to speak are restored instantly.

Limbo Lockjaw

This disease typically affects those who are severely wounded in the realm of Limbo. Slaadi and other natural inhabitants seem to be immune to the affliction, leaving primes and other planars as potential victims. Characters are entitled to a system shock roll to resist the effect.

Limbo lockjaw follows deep, penetrating and crushing wounds with extensive tissue damage. If the wound is not healed within 1d4 hours, the chaotic nature of Limbo causes the muscles in the surrounding tissue to spasm and seize up. Jarring convulsions quickly spread to the rest of the body, resulting in a –2 penalty to all rolls and imposing a 25% chance of spell failure for all cast spells. If left unattended, death occurs from respiratory and cardiac arrest 1d12+12 hours after the onset of the first symptoms. Spasms of the cheek muscles set the face in a peculiar, sarcastic grin at the time of death.

The symptoms and death caused by Limbo lockjaw are completely negated by a *cure greater disease* spell. All other curative magic has no effect once Limbo lockjaw has set in.

The Pox (Scourge of Anthraxus)

Bar none, the most virulent scourge to ever cross the Outer Planes is the pox. Seers claim that the pox was created by the yugoloth Anthraxus either as an afterthought or as a means of getting back at the ultraloths who ousted him from Khin-Oin. (For details, see the "Pox of the Planes" article in *DRAGON® Magazine Annual* #2.) Others attest that the pox was created by the Lords of the Nine as a weapon against the tanar'ri in the Blood War. Like many engineered diseases, however, the pox mutated over time, infecting thousands of fiends. Gradually, it found its way out of the Lower Planes and spread to the rest of the Outer Planes.

The pox is highly contagious, transmitted by touch from one sod to another. Anyone touched by an infected carrier must make a system shock roll to resist the scourge. Early symptoms manifest within 1d12+12 hours and resemble a common cold or the flu, but victims seldom realize the true nature of the ailment until much later. This often causes a pox epidemic, since victims become contagious 1–2 hours after becoming infected.

The second stage of the pox is marked by high fever, fatigue, muscle pain, and vomiting; these symptoms occur 4d6 hours after the initial symptoms, imposing a –4 penalty to all attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, and proficiency checks, as well as a 25% chance of spell failure for spellcasters.

The most tell-tale sign of the pox comes a day later when pustular pimples begin forming on the victim's body. At this point the victim is incapacitated, unable to do anything beyond the simplest tasks. Death occurs 2d6 hours later, as the puss fills the sod's body with lethal toxin. A *slow poison* has no effect on the pox, while a *neutralize poison* spell purges the toxin but not the disease; it must be recast upon the victim once per day to prevent new toxin from forming. A *cure disease* spell holds the pox in check for 24 hours at a time, while a *cure greater disease* removes the pox entirely.

Survivors of the pox often experience long-term immunity to the disease; as a rule, any PC who survives the ordeal and makes a successful system shock roll is immune to the disease thenceforth.

Planar Rabies (Sceulia)

Like Beastland fever, planar rabies (or sceulia) has its similarities to more common diseases found elsewhere. However, this version is a nastier than common rabies, as magical and nonmagical creatures can both be carriers.

Sceulia is spread via the bite of an infected animal. Any character bitten by such a creature is entitled to a system shock roll, with success indicating that the character was not infected. The slow incubation period of 2d10 days sometimes makes the disease difficult to detect until the first symptoms appear. If the wound is treated with a *cure disease* (or better) spell within 1d4 turns of

infection, the disease is cured at that time. Other curative magic heals the wound but does not prevent the development of sceulia.

At the end of the incubation period, the healed wound becomes irritated and painful, and local extremities becomes stiff and numb (–1 to attack rolls and –2 to ability/proficiency checks involving physical activity). Psychological effects include depression and anxiety, followed by periods of excitation and irritability. This progresses to a general feeling of terror magnified by difficulty in breathing and swallowing (–3 to all rolls; no spellcasting possible). The victim then suffers from extreme thirst and spasm of the larynx, which increase when water is present or even mentioned.

The next stage of the sceulia infection, occurring 2d6 hours after the initial symptoms, produces a thick, foamy secretion of mucus in the mouth. It's during this time the victim can spread the affliction to others. The disease also affects the victim's sanity, causing uncontrollable fits of rage (treat as the wizard's spell *confusion*, but roll for a new effect every turn instead of each round). *Charm person, charm monster, emotion, enthrall, hypnotism, hypnotic pattern, fear, suggestion*, and other mind-affecting spells have no effect on the rabid victim. The exceptions are *chaos, domination, eyebite*, and *feeblemind*, which affect the victim normally. This stage of the disease lasts for 1d4+1 days, after which the victim dies from convulsive seizures, cardiac arrest, or respiratory distress.

Beyond the initial system shock roll, there is no saving throw for sceulia. If a victim doesn't cure the affliction with a *cure disease* before the incubation period is over, the sod's only hope is a *cure greater disease* or *wish* spell.

Tanar'ri, baatezu, yugoloths, celestials, and proxies (not to mention the powers) are immune to planar rabies. However, fiends are often carriers of the disease. Sceulia is more commonplace in the Beastlands, as well as other layers that support a heavy animal population.

Prime Pyrexia

Some primes just can't handle life on the planes from the moment they arrive; there's just something in the air that doesn't quite agree with them. The initial symptoms of prime pyrexia resemble those of a nasty cold. Unlike a cold, heroes who don't seek curing after contracting prime pyrexia might find their tour of the planes shortened.

The DM should check for prime pyrexia only the first time a character visits the Outer Planes, the Outlands, or Sigil, and only after the character has been away from his home plane for a week or more. (Planar characters are not susceptible to the disease.) The first symptoms of prime pyrexia—fever and chills—occur within 48 hours of contraction, followed by the development of an ulcerated lump on the elbow and in the armpit. While the ulcer is small and painless, the nearby glands quickly become painfully swollen and often burst with a vile green ooze.

Left untreated, prime pyrexia can last three or four weeks, accompanied by high fever and exhaustion as the disease progresses (causing the victim a –2 penalty to all ability score, proficiency, and attack rolls). At the end of that time, the character must make a system shock roll at –15% or die in 1d6 rounds. In such fatal cases, death occurs from cardiac distress or pneumonia. A successful roll indicates that the disease has run its course, and the victim makes a full recovery in 1d12+12 hours, having properly "adjusted" to life on the planes.

A *cure disease* negates prime pyrexia prior to the character having to make a system shock check. If the system shock roll fails, only *cure greater disease* can save the victim.

Prime pyrexia is not contagious at any stage but does tend to mark a newcomer's arrival on the planes. Shifty bloods often use the disease as an opportunity to take advantage of the clueless, peeling them out of their jink by selling them ineffective remedies.

Zombic Leprosy

What started as a local affliction deep in the Abyss has spread across many of the Outer Planes over time. Born in the town of Naratyr (also known as the City of the Dead), zombic leprosy is a magical disease created long ago by a drow priestess in honor of her goddess, Kiaransalee. Rumor is the priestess became one of the goddess's proxies for her efforts. Most believe she aimlessly wanders the planes as a form of revenant, cursed to spread the disease for all eternity.

This affliction is spread through touch. A system shock roll at –25% is required to resist the disease, although paladins do not suffer this penalty. Primes familiar with leprosy can easily mistake the two diseases in the early stages. Early symptoms of zombic leprosy manifest within 1d12+12 hours and include the loss of sensation in patches of skin, which quickly spreads across the body. Within 1d4 days, damage to nerves and loss of sensation quickly increase, causing isolated muscle paralysis (and a –3 penalty to all attack rolls and ability/proficiency checks involving physical activity) and bloody, infected patches of skin across the body (–3 to Charisma). Within 24 hours, these nodules of skin become hard and brittle. If the victim does not receive sufficient ministrations (i.e., a *cure greater disease* or *wish* spell) within this time, the victim dies, rising 1d6 rounds later as a mindless zombie capable of infecting others with zombic leprosy by touch. Lower-planar fiends and upper-planar celestials are immune to zombic leprosy, as are creatures that are impervious to flesh-based afflictions. Only a *resurrection* spell or the powers themselves can change back a character who has become a zombie leper.

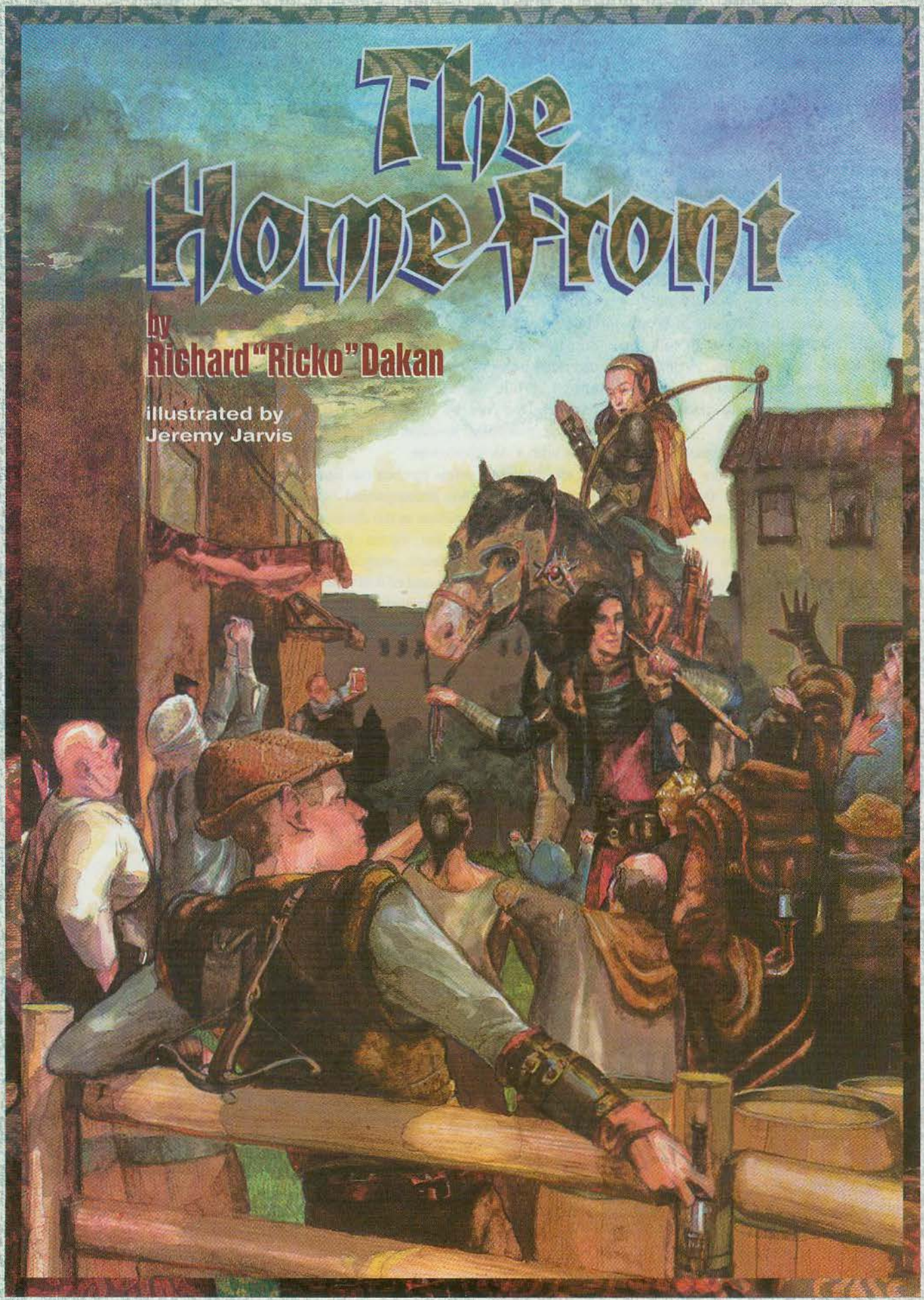
Zombic lepers are a favorite tool of Rotting Jack, a proxy who transforms Naratyr when Kiaransalee is away during the summer months. Jack delights in sending zombie lepers to the far reaches of the Outer Planes, eventually swelling the ranks of his army for some insidious purpose. The chant is that Rotting Jack holds the secret to zombic leprosy—along with an elixir that restores zombie lepers to their former living states. However, only a leatherhead deals with Rotting Jack directly. "Better off dead than deal with Jack," is a common saying in Naratyr.

Having walked away from Gen Con 1998 with a rather debilitating sinus infection, it was poetic justice that Kevin penned this article for the Annual.

The Homefront

by
Richard "Ricko" Dakan

illustrated by
Jeremy Jarvis



The great majority of accidents happen within a few miles of home.

The reason for this should be obvious:

people spend most of their lives within a few miles of home.

The lesson here is that you don't have to leave home to have excitement in your life. In the FIFTH AGE® campaign, this statement holds even more truth. In a world ruled by dragons and populated with their foul servants, a group of heroes can have all the adventure they ever want just by letting it come to them.

Adventures on the home front have a decidedly different tone than the traditional FIFTH AGE campaign. Most campaigns center around quests, in the pursuit of which a group of heroes might travel across the continent, seeing many wonders and defeating myriad foes. But who is guarding the families back home? Who is making sure they are safe to raise the crops, that the dragon's servants don't steal every last coin from them in the name of taxes, that raiding draconians don't burn the town to the ground? That's a job for heroes, and if they think it's any less exciting or demanding than completing quests, then they have a thing or two to learn about the harsh realities of life in the Fifth Age.

The home front campaign is perfect for the DRAGONLANCE® FIFTH AGE setting, and DMs can adapt the following suggestions to any campaign with little trouble. It assumes that the campaign centers around a small town or village in which the heroes have made their home, at least for a while. The heroes represent the only significant force protecting their home from outside threat. Certainly there might be a small local militia and even a few retired knights, but the heroes alone have the experience, strength, and will to stand up to any major threats that might befall their home.

Campaigning at Home

The choice to play a home front campaign must come from both the Narrator and the players. Most players have certain expectations about a DRAGONLANCE game, and if the Narrator doesn't meet or change those expectations, he or she will have a hard time keeping the players from walking off to some more quest-centered game. As the Narrator, you can tell the players that there will be just as much excitement and fighting, plus extra challenges the likes of which they have never faced before. The prospects of politics, public relations, resource management, and intrigue should tempt even the most recalcitrant players.

Once you've all agreed to try this nontraveling campaign style, it's up to the Narrator to set the stage. The Narrator must decide where to place this town. The players might wish to have some input. Perhaps some of them have interesting ideas for characters from a specific region. Maybe one of them is not interested in playing someone from a town inside a Dragon Realm. Take all these factors into account when making your decision. Remember, there is no reason that all the heroes have to be from the town. Some or all of them could have adopted it as their new or temporary home.

In the FIFTH AGE setting, all of the lands of Ansalon fall into one of two categories: Dragon Realms and Free Realms. Which of these the heroes end up in has an enormous impact on the kind of challenges they meet. In general, life in a Dragon Realm is more difficult than life in a Free Realm. However, Free Realms are not the safest places either, and they present their own problems.

Life in a Dragon Realm

Being in a Dragon Realm means that your entire town lives in constant fear of someday waking up and finding an angry dragon burning their homes to the ground. Fear lurks in the background of every moment of every day. Of course, the dragons seldom destroy their subjects for no reason (although "just because they feel like it" is sometimes a valid reason).

The great dragons have established these realms for several reasons. First and foremost, there is ego. The dragons love to have lesser beings fear and worship them. The more subjects they have the better. Secondly, there is temporal power. Living subjects can be tax-paying subjects, and taxes allow the dragons to amass wealth and pay for armies, as well as other trappings of rule. Thus, most villages and towns live their entire lives without even seeing the great dragon that rules over them. Unless, of course, they do something to arouse its anger.

The most onerous fact of life for a citizen of a Dragon Realm is the lack of a civil order or rule of law. The servants of the dragon, whatever their race, are inevitably cruel, vicious, and demanding. They not only collect the dragon's taxes but extort other payments as well. Dragon lord servants have the power to take whatever they want, and there is little the local people can do to stop them. Farmers in a Dragon Realm commonly end up paying over sixty percent of their crops to extortionist tax collectors. This makes starvation common and winters particularly harsh.

Although dragons guard their borders jealously from each other, they seldom pay much attention to what goes on within them. As long as the people remain cowed and the taxes keep flowing, the dragons care little for things like roaming packs of monsters or bandits. The average villagers, however, care a great deal. Many poor farmers have turned to banditry when they could no longer support themselves through legitimate means. Most Dragon Realms harbor organized packs of bandits who prey on the weak and defenseless. Although the dragon's soldiers might fight the bandits if they came across them, no one is going out of their way to hunt down the thieves. Even more dangerous are the wild and monstrous creatures that wander freely in many Dragon Realms. Ogrekind and goblinkind, as well as more dangerous monsters, are drawn to the chaotic atmosphere of a Dragon Realm.

All in all, life in a Dragon Realm is seldom pleasant. Unfortunately, most dragons take a dim view of citizens who try to emigrate from their realm. A group of would-be pilgrims might find themselves set upon by the dragon itself. In the past years, tales of such attacks have circulated through every Dragon Realm, and few luckless citizens are willing to flee and risk such terrible reprisal. Better to live with the evils you know than face the evils you don't. It might not be the perfect life, but it is the perfect place for a group of heroes to make a difference.

Life in a Free Realm

The exact character of life in a Free Realm varies dramatically from one location to another. Some lands are relatively peaceful and prosperous. Others, like Neraka, have special circumstances to consider when setting a campaign there. (Perhaps the heroes are all Knights of Takhisis, for instance.) Consult Book Two of the DRAGONLANCE FIFTH AGE series for more information. There are, however, a few generalities that hold true for most Free Realms when it comes to day-to-day living.

The biggest difference between life in a Free Realm and life in a Dragon Realm is that the former is much more unpredictable. The dragons have brought a high degree of stability to their realms. It isn't especially pleasant, but citizens know what each day brings in a dragon's realm. In a Free Realm, the spectrum of possibilities is much wider. The constant swing between good and bad can be more disheartening than the constant lows in a Dragon Realm. Most people would agree, however, that having a few really good weeks during the year is better than having none at all.

The greatest difficulty for those in Free Realms is the constantly shifting political situation. All of Ansalon fears the next expansion of a Dragon Realm. If the great dragons aren't enough to worry about, there's always the fear of the Knights of Takhisis storming out of Neraka to increase their holdings. Border conflicts between Free Realms are common, and they often develop into full-scale wars. Few farmers and villagers find the prospect of being drafted into the local militia appealing. In some realms, these conflicts are so common and expensive that the people pay taxes almost as high as those in the Dragon Realms, and Dragon Realms have no monopoly on bandits, raiders, and monsters. All of these dangers threaten Free Realm communities as well, although usually to a lesser degree than in Dragon Realms. Still, the heroes have plenty to keep them busy.

Creating the Town

Once you have decided where the heroes' home town is located, it's time to develop it in more detail. Since the heroes spend a lot of time in town, the Narrator should create a detailed map of the community and the surrounding lands. Most small towns in the FIFTH AGE setting center around agriculture of one type or another, so it is important to include the various farms and other agricultural areas on your map. You might even want two maps: one for the region within twenty or so miles of the town, and one of the town itself.

Now fill the town with people and places. Every town is different, but the following section presents a number of common features you might include in creating your community.

Blacksmith: Every town needs one and the heroes need one to repair their battered and broken weapons and armor.

Granary/Mill: A key element in any agricultural community, it allows the farmers to turn their wheat into flour. Its destruction severely damages the community's economy and ability to feed itself.

Fair Grounds: Not so much a building as a place, fair grounds bring in people from all around the adjoining countryside for monthly or seasonal markets—a significant boon to the local economy.

General Store: A place where the villagers can buy needed manufactured goods imported from other areas. A link to the rest of the world.

Guard House/Towers: Places to store weapons, house guards, and train soldiers. Not every village has one, but every village should.

Inn or Tavern: The center of many people's social life. A place for all to relax and tell stories. Important for town morale.

Keep: A large, fortified building, few towns are lucky enough to have such a place. In times of trouble it provides shelter for the entire town and serves as a focus for both defense and the projection of military power into the surrounding countryside.

Temple: Somewhat rare in the FIFTH AGE setting, a temple provides not only moral and spiritual guidance but also might have bona fide healers who can tend to the town's sick and wounded. Also serves as a social center.

Town Hall: Again, not every town has one of these. The town hall is the administrative center of the community. Here the community carries out legal proceedings, stores records and deeds, and perhaps has a jail cell or two.

Walls: Few towns have walls, but the heroes might think seriously about building some if they are having problems with raiders.

Wharf: Communities on the water may be centered around fishing, not farming. In that case, the wharf is an important location for both the economy and the social scene.

Support Your Local Hero

After you have a location and have described the town in general, it's time to fit the heroes into their new home. There are any number of reasons why the heroes may have decided to settle in this particular place.

Home Sweet Home: Some of the heroes originally come from the town. They might have left and then returned, or they might never have left at all. A hero with a high social status might actually be the noble person responsible for the town and its surrounding lands (in which case they would have a keep or manor house from which to rule). The heroes-as-nobles campaign setting is one of the strongest backgrounds for a home front campaign. The noble hero has an obligation to protect the town, and the townsfolk have a natural reason to look to the hero for protection. The rest of the heroes are friends, relatives, or retainers of the local noble. The noble-oriented campaign also allows the heroes to engage in the larger political machinations of the realm in which they live.

A Nice Quiet Corner: Perhaps the heroes have had their fill of tramping across Krynn in search of adventure. They have decided to find a nice quiet home to live out the rest of their days. Of course, few places in Krynn qualify as "nice and quiet" anymore. The heroes have hardly set up their new homes when bad things start to happen to their neighbors. Once a hero, always a hero, and it is only natural for the characters to step in and lend a hand. As time goes on, the locals come more and more to rely upon the heroes for protection, making it all the harder for the heroes to abandon them.

Blood Oath: This background works especially well for knights of any sort. Perhaps a dying comrade asked the knight to swear to protect his home village. Now the hero must make good on his word and journey to a strange town he has sworn to protect. First, of course, he must win the confidence of the mistrusting townsfolk, but maybe his friends can help him win the people over. This background works well if the knight's oath included some sort of time limit. It allows the Narrator to integrate the home front campaign into a larger ongoing campaign, then leave it behind after a year or two of game time.

The Needs of the Many: Perhaps the heroes are simply passing through the town and discover that it is in dire straits. Goblins pounding on the walls, monsters crawling up through the sewer, corrupt nobles abusing the people, and other sundry offenses call for heroic intervention. The heroes are drawn in by what seems like a normal adventure, then find it hard to leave. To complicate matters, perhaps a handsome young local catches the eye of one of the heroes. The locals might offer to support the heroes if they agree to stay and protect them—or at least stay long enough to train the locals to defend themselves.

Base of Operations: The heroes need not necessarily spend all of their time on the home front. The town could simply be a base of operations from which the heroes sally forth on other adventures. However, they do spend a fair amount of time at home and care a great deal about what happens there. This allows the Narrator to mix the two campaign styles, having some stories center around the town and some around more traditional quests. Ideally, the Narrator integrates the two so that events at home lead to quests, and quests have repercussions on events back home.

Adventuring on the Home Front

Now the Narrator has set the stage, the characters have their motivations, and it's time to start the action. The Narrator has a number of different options when it comes to providing adventures for the heroes. Exactly what the DM chooses to throw at the players depends on what kind of campaign he is running. Below are a number of story hooks for a FIFTH AGE home front campaign that the Narrator can develop into complete adventures.

Raids: Raids by brigands and even foreign armies usually come unexpected and offer a good opportunity for the heroes to show their true mettle. Finding and destroying the raiders' base of operations might be a high priority.

Tax Collectors: Especially in Dragon Realms, evading the onerous taxes can be a source of roleplaying adventure for an entire evening. The heroes must not only help the villagers hide their meager wealth but also prevent the tax collectors from extorting too much from the town—all this without arousing the anger of the local ruler (or dragon).

Cursed Crops: For some mysterious reason, this season's crops are all dying in the field. The heroes must discover the cause, be it a curse by some magician, someone poisoning the fields, or just plain bad luck.

Spies Among Us: Someone in the village is in the employ of either raiders, a foreign government, or the local dragon. This spy passes on information about trade caravans, spreads rumors about the heroes, and does other traitorous things. The heroes must sniff out the spy and bring him or her to justice.

Monster Among Us: Something horrible comes in the night and kills livestock and even people. The heroes must hunt down the monster and destroy it. Alternatively, someone in the village is actually a monster in disguise.

Murder Mystery: A body is found dead in the town square. Who killed him? And why? It is up to the heroes to solve this mystery before someone else dies too.

Political Intrigue: In Free Realms and Dragon Realms there is always political turmoil and intrigue, and the heroes could easily be drawn into national politics. On the local scene, perhaps someone in town thinks the heroes are a nuisance and wants them run out of town. The heroes must convince the town of their own worth—a problem to solve with diplomacy, not combat.

Guerrilla Warfare: The heroes are actually in the village to create a popular base for a guerrilla war against the rulers, whether it be the Knights of Takhisis or a dragon lord. The heroes make raids on the evil government and train a secret army of revolution.

It's All About the People

While the heroes busy themselves fighting off various threats to local safety, they still must keep in mind that, in the end, it is the people who matter. The heroes' overriding goal remains the security of their friends and neighbors. As the public defenders of all the community, the heroes benefit from praise when they do well and suffer criticism when things go wrong (whether or not it is their fault). To take this into account we have provided a chart for judging the changes in popular opinion about the heroes. As various events affect the community at

Hero Popularity Table

Event	Modifier
✦ Defeating minor foes (goblins, orcs, human raiders, etc.)	+1 per 5 foes defeated
✦ Defeating Major foes (ogres, larger monsters, spell-users, etc.)	+1 per 3 foes defeated
✦ Defeating greater foes (big monsters, greater wizards, anything up to a dragon)	+1 per foe defeated
✦ Defeating a dragon (that's bothering the town)	+3 per dragon
✦ Protecting trade caravans	+1 per month of successful trade
✦ Rescuing abducted citizens	+1 (+2 if child) per abductee rescued
✦ Good Harvest	+2
✦ Building new structures:	
wall around town	+1 permanent
guard post/tower	+3 permanent
keep	+5 permanent
temple	+3 permanent
marketplace	+1 permanent
theater/performance space	+2 permanent
✦ Each resident who died in a raid on the town	–1
✦ Each resident abducted	–1 (–2 if a child)
✦ Each month of trade interrupted by raids	–1
✦ Bad Harvest	–3
✦ Each month heroes are away from town	–1
✦ Any attack on town (whether or not heroes repulse it)	–2
✦ Any battle in which heroes led townsfolk and town lost battle (in addition to penalties for dead residents)	–4
✦ Each destroyed home	–2 (until rebuilt)
✦ Destroyed commercial buildings (inns, mills, marketplaces)	–3 (until rebuilt)
✦ Destroyed wall	–3 (until rebuilt)
✦ Destroyed guard post/tower	–4 (until rebuilt)
✦ Destroyed temple	–5 (until rebuilt)
✦ Destroyed keep	–6 (until rebuilt)

large, popular opinion manifests itself as modifiers to difficulty levels/attribute scores when dealing with the population.

The narrator should keep track of the current level of popular opinion. When the campaign begins, the population is probably neutrally disposed toward the heroes. The beginning popularity level should be 0. Every time something dramatic happens, the Narrator should consult the **Hero Popularity Table** and adjust the current popularity rating.

For those using the SAGA® system, simply add the popular opinion rating to any Presence-based actions the heroes take when dealing with the local populace (encouraging them to help build a new wall, leading them in battle, collecting money for widows and orphans, and so on). If the rating is negative, subtract it from the hero's Presence rating.

Of course the population tends to have a short memory for both the good and the bad. Thus, every month the popularity rating automatically moves one step toward zero. Thus, if your heroes defeated a group of fifteen raiding bandits, their popularity would increase by 3. If nothing else happened during the next month, their popularity would decrease to 2. After three months of inaction, their popularity would be back to 0. Some items on the chart have a permanent bonus. These are buildings that the heroes have constructed for the betterment of the community. As long as these structures remain standing, the heroes retain that popularity bonus. There are also long-term negative modifiers on the table. These are buildings that have been destroyed. Until the heroes help rebuild destroyed buildings, the negative modifiers continue to affect them, no matter how much time passes.

Note: Defeating foes earns popularity only if the foes are defeated while attacking the community in some way.

The **Hero Popularity Table** is just a beginning. The Narrator should feel free to modify the heroes' popularity rating whenever appropriate. When the heroes' popularity rating falls below –20, they are no longer welcome in the town. The heroes could conceivably win their way back into the hearts of the townsfolk through some extraordinary means, but even after that they have a base popularity of –5 instead of simply 0.

Making Speeches

A hero can temporarily raise his or her popularity with the townsfolk by making a rousing speech. Heroes most often make such speeches when trying to urge the townsfolk to some specific action. Examples include taking up arms against an enemy, rebuilding destroyed homes or fortifications, agreeing to exile some traitorous townsperson, and so on. The hero making the speech makes an Average Presence action, modified by the current public opinion rating. For each point of success, the public opinion rating improves by one point. With a successful opening speech, the hero gains the public opinion bonus on one Presence check when trying to urge the populace to do something they normally would not do.

Training Townsfolk

Defending the town is only one part of a hero's role on the home front. Heroes should also ready the people for the day when they must defend themselves. Most farmers and traders know little of fighting and other arts, but they can learn if properly taught and motivated. Warriors can train the peasants to fight and work as a team. Spellcasters might even take on a few gifted pupils and teach them the beginnings of the magical arts. Such training could take months or even years to complete. When all is said and done, however, the town is better protected, and the heroes' jobs become somewhat easier.

Anyone can learn to be a soldier. Not everyone can be a teacher. To train others in the finer points of armed combat, a hero must have both the skills and the ability to teach those skills. A hero must have an "A" ability code in the ability in which he or she wishes to train someone. For example, if a

knight wants to train the locals to fight with spears or swords, she must have an A-level Strength. If she wants to train them to use bows, she must have an A-level Dexterity. Just because they have the skill does not mean heroes can teach that skill to others. The hero must also have a Presence of at least 6 and a Presence Ability code of at least C. Note: do not add popularity modifiers to the hero's Presence when determining whether or not he or she can teach.

It is assumed that all peasants begin unskilled in the use of any type of weapon. Each month of training allows the hero to make an Ability check based on the ability he or she is trying to teach (for example, a Strength ability check for teaching sword use). The hero can train a number of students equal to twice his or her Presence. The difficulty of the check depends on what the hero is trying to teach. To raise peasants from a proficiency of X to D requires a Challenging difficulty action. To raise them from D to C requires a Daunting action and three months instead of one month of training. Heroes cannot train large groups of people past a proficiency of C. The hero may take on individual students to train even higher. Training an individual to move from C to B requires six months and is a Daunting action. Training to proficiency A requires an additional full year of training and another Daunting action.

Training peasants to become spell casters is much more difficult. Only a few people in the town probably have ability scores high enough to learn magic. The Narrator should pick these individuals in secret and generate statistics for them. A spellcaster can take on only a few students. The hero must have an Ability code of A in the appropriate ability and a Presence of at least 6. A hero with a spell-related ability rating between 6 and 8 may have one student at a time. Only spellcasters with scores of 9A or greater may have two students. Students may only learn one type of spellcasting at a time (Sorcery or Mysticism). It takes three months and a Challenging action to raise a student from X to D. Another six months and another Challenging action to go from D to C. Nine months and a Daunting action to go from C to B. Finally, it takes an additional year and Daunting checks for student and teacher to go to A.

While it might take a long time to create proficient townsfolk, the effort does pay off. It is especially useful to train as many citizens to defend themselves as possible. A town that fights for itself discourages attacks by bandits and raiders. There are plenty of other towns that are not as difficult to attack. The heroes may even build up the town's defenses to such a point that they would feel comfortable leaving the community and moving on to some other, more needy, village.

Richard "Ricko" Dakan is a freelance author and game designer who has worked on game lines from DRAGONLANCE FIFTH AGE *to* Kult. *He currently resides in sunny Sarasota, Florida.*

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ALTERNATE

FROM THE STAR FRONTIERS® Setting TO THE ALTERNITY® Game

Many old-time gamers have fond memories of STAR FRONTIERS, a science-fiction roleplaying game TSR released in the early 1980s. Some authors who appreciated the game even brought the original races from STAR FRONTIERS back in the AD&D® SPELLJAMMER® campaign setting. The apelike yazirians reappeared as the hadozee, a clone of the insectoid vrusk came back as the rastipede, a version of the dralasite showed up as the plasmoid, and the evil sathar race even resurfaced to be named the syllix. In time, as many great games do, SPELLJAMMER took its place among retired RPGs. With the release of the ALTERNITY Science Fiction Roleplaying Game, however, fans once again have a chance to integrate the STAR FRONTIERS races into a totally new game. In addition to the STAR FRONTIERS aliens, here are guidelines for converting STAR FRONTIERS player characters to the ALTERNITY game.

by
Steve Bartell
illustrated by Tom Baxa

ALTERNITY

FRONTIERS

How Does This Fit in my Campaign?

Gamemasters have a few options to consider when incorporating the material presented here into their ALTERNITY game campaigns.

Those who are familiar with the STAR FRONTIERS game might base their entire campaign in the area of space known as "The Frontier," from the STAR FRONTIERS universe. The character and equipment conversions provided here offer an excellent opportunity to take old or existing STAR FRONTIERS campaigns into the ALTERNITY rules system.

The Gamemaster might instead opt simply to introduce some or all of the following races and equipment into an existing ALTERNITY campaign. One or more of these races might have found their way into the hero's area of the galaxy. Perhaps the heroes explore an unchartered region and encounter these races. Possibly a scientist associate invents an important piece of equipment found here, such as defensive screens, and the heroes are caught up in a game of intrigue as adversaries try to steal the designs.

Whether it is a TSR setting, such as the STAR*DRIVE™ campaign, or one of the Gamemaster's own design, this information is flexible enough to find a place in almost any campaign.

Dralasite

The dralasite took a curious path during its evolution; rather than evolving from single-celled organisms into amphibians, reptiles, and other advanced creatures, the dralasite maintained its simple body structure. These short, bloblike humanoid creatures stand about 1.3 meters tall and average one meter wide.

The external membrane that serves as their skin is dry and has the texture of fine sandpaper. This membrane ranges from dull gray to earth tones. Dralasites have no internal skeleton; they maintain their shape through an intricate system of muscles. This enhanced muscular system gives dralasites strength superior to that of most humans.

The internal organs of a dralasite float freely within its body in a thick organic liquid. These include numerous hearts and a central nerve bundle that functions as the brain. Dralasites do not have eyes as most creatures do but "see" through an elaborate conglomeration of optical nerves called "eyespots." These eyespots collect into two dense patches on what is commonly considered the dralasite's head.

Dralasites have no lungs but breathe by diffusion of oxygen across the skin membrane. Not only do they breathe through the skin but also they acquire their sense of smell this way. With their entire body capable of processing odors, the olfactory ability is the keenest sense of a dralasite. It is so refined that dralasites can often recognize people and places by scent alone. Breathing through the skin does not hinder the dralasites' ability to swim underwater. Absorbing air is a conscious act, and they can simply choose to "hold their breath" at any time. With no lungs, dralasites produce speech by expelling air past a voice box from a contracting, bellows-type organ.

History

Dralasites originate from the watery world of Flaginnor. This planet is more than 90% covered with water, with only a few land masses dotting the surface. Most of the animal life on Flaginnor consists of amphibians and fish, with a handful of reptilian creatures.

The history of Flaginnor is a peaceful one. Most dralasites are open to new ideas and are more concerned with discovery than with conflict and power. Dralasites welcomed the vrusk with open pseudopods when the insectoid species initiated first contact. Dralasites were in their Age of Reason when the vrusk arrived and had long before concluded that they were not alone in the universe. The vrusk saw vast potential in the insightful ameoba-like creatures, and they helpfully tried to show them the ways of business and commerce. This attempt was unsuccessful, however, and it was not long before they realized that the dralasite way of thinking was incompatible with vrusk corporate philosophy. The vrusk instead

changed their goal to developing trade with the natives of Flaginnor.

The vrusk took it upon themselves to teach the dralasites about their advanced technology. The dralasites enthusiastically absorbed the new knowledge and soon began developing technology of their own. Within a few generations, many dralasite inventions surpassed those of their vrusk benefactors. Over the next century, dralasite technology successfully evolved from a society just on the heels of scientific discovery into one that traverses the stars.

Far Future Campaigns

Armed with the technology introduced to them by the vrusk, dralasites are just beginning to use ships with faster-than-light (FTL) travel about the same time as humankind is developing its own. Gamemasters running a campaign in the STAR FRONTIERS setting should have the dralasite and human colonists meet in the Frontier at the beginning of Progress Level 7 (PL 7), introduced to each other by the vrusk. Other campaign settings can have groups of dralasites and humans meet anywhere in space, as each of them have interstellar travel capability. Dralasites almost always embrace first contact with other species, sometimes to the point of naiveté. This attitude opens dralasites up as strong friends and allies—or as targets for exploitation, depending on the nature of those they meet.

Roleplaying

Dralasite society relies heavily on intellectual and philosophical disciplines. Debating and analyzing situations are favorite pastimes to a dralasite. Their search for knowledge and understanding far outweighs the search for wealth and power, and greed is a rare attribute to find in this race. Money does not imply status in dralasite cultures. The general acceptance of one's ideas is a far more significant gauge of prestige than possessions.

Dralasite characters place a high value on humor. Unfortunately, the humor that dralasites enjoy is often dry and simplistic. This leads to a common phrase among other species—"Easier than amusing a dralasite"—employed when describing the simplicity of a task.

Clothing is not an important factor in dralasite cultures, as it can make breathing difficult. Equipment is often carried on web or utility belts. Dralasites eat by osmosis, absorbing the food into their bodies where it is digested by one of their many stomachs.

All dralasites are hermaphroditic, alternating between both male and female stages during their lifetime. By PL 5, the dralasites developed pharmaceuticals that allow individual dralasites to control these stages. Reproduction occurs through a process known as "budding." The male expels reproductive spores that become attached to a female. These cells then germinate into a new individual. This embryo grows on the mother for about three months before detaching as a unique, infant dralasite.

While they are very social creatures, the nuclear family unit is unknown to the dralasites. Communities share responsibility for raising the young, and the concepts of "father," "mother," and "sibling" are strange to them.

Ability Score Range

Ability	Range
STR	7/15
DEX	5/11
CON	6/15
INT	4/14
WIL	4/13
PER	4/12

Free Broad Skills

Ability	Skill
Strength	Athletics
Constitution	Stamina
Intelligence	Knowledge
Will	Awareness
Personality	Culture
Personality	Interaction

Special Abilities

Elasticity: Dralasites can "grow" additional pseudopods to use as arms and legs, as well as enact other physical changes due to the flexibility of their ameoba-like bodies. This change can be as minor as growing a new arm or as dramatic as a dralasite's absorbing all appendages and molding itself into a large, living ball. Absorbing or growing a new pseudopod is not an immediate process and can take up to five (d4+1) minutes. Each limb must be added or removed individually; multiple limbs cannot be grown or absorbed simultaneously. These changes take complete concentration, and a dralasite can take no other action while performing the metamorphosis (although the change can be put on hold until later if needed).

A dralasite can have up to a number of limbs equal to its Dexterity divided by two (rounded up). This allows a hero with a Dexterity of 9 to have three arms and two legs, no legs and five arms, two legs and two arms, or any other combination of five or fewer limbs. Although a dralasite can have additional arms and legs, multiple legs do not increase movement rate, and numerous arms cannot be used simultaneously. The dralasite nerve bundle that functions as its brain can maintain control over only two arms at once. The other arms are "dormant" limbs. While these limbs can still hold things in their dormant state, they cannot manipulate objects, fire weapons, or perform other similar actions. An arm can grow smaller pseudopods that act as "fingers." A dralasite limb can be a maximum of one meter long and a minimum of ten centimeters thick, while each finger can be a maximum of ten centimeters long and a minimum of one centimeter thick.

Lie Detection: A dralasite has an enhanced ability to tell when someone is lying to them. If the dralasite is communicating face to face with the person in question, the Gamemaster can make a secret Awareness—*intuition* skill check for the hero with a +2 penalty. A successful result indicates the hero has successfully seen through the deception. A Critical Failure means the hero adamantly believes the exact opposite of the true situation (i.e., the dralasite might believe it is hearing a lie when it is hearing the truth).

Vrusk

First contact with a vrusk can be unnerving. These insectoid lifeforms stand on eight spindly legs protruding from a 1.5-meter-long abdomen. A vrusk's torso, or thorax, extends upright from their abdomen. Two arms supporting five-fingered hands are attached to the thorax, with one on each side. These double-jointed arms can reach any point on the

vrusk's body and can even rotate in a complete circle.

The bulbous head of a vrusk is entirely insectlike, complete with two antennae, large multifaceted eyes, and four mandibles around its mouth. A vrusk's eyesight is roughly equivalent to that of a human, with the same field of vision. Vrusk antennae function as olfactory organs, giving them a slightly better sense of smell than humans have. The mandibles of a vrusk are used for tearing and manipulating food. Although they carry a sharp edge, they inflict no more damage than does a human's bite.

A hard, chitinous exoskeleton covers the vrusk body. While the exoskeleton protects a vrusk from the minor scrapes and bruises to which a human would be susceptible, it is not strong enough to prevent stun, wound, or mortal damage. Every few years during adulthood, and much more frequently in youth, vrusk molt to gain a new carapace. Vrusk also have an internal skeletal system made of calcium phosphate to support their large frame.

Vrusk females give birth by oviparity, laying a clutch of one to three leathery eggs. The eggs are then incubated by one of the parents until they hatch. Machines that can incubate the eggs are available by PL 4, but most vrusk disapprove of this method of bringing offspring to term.

History

Vrusk society developed into structured organizations early in their history. As early as Progress Level 2 on their homeworld of K'arek-Kar, capitalism was nearly universal. Corporations had already begun to shape society, and sovereign power had given way to business elected democracies. Businesses continued to grow in size and power until the vrusk Industrial Age and the time of the Corporate Wars. This conflict stemmed from heavy contention between the major oligopolies as each tried to drive competitors out of business. Hostilities between the corporations continued to mount until violent confrontations and corporate espionage became commonplace. When it became apparent that their society was about to tear itself apart, the vrusk sensibly backed off and went through a paradigm shift in how they viewed corporate competition. Rather than trying to drive all other competitive organizations out of business, many corporations simply became specialized in what they did best, relying on other corporations to supply them with the additional services they needed. Thus were born the vrusk trade houses. Other corporations narrowed their focus to a few products and services but became completely self sufficient. Biologically related families became less important as the corporations became the "family" of their employees. As unorthodox as this social structure might seem to humans and many other species, it promoted peace among the vrusk and allowed their society to flourish.

Near-Future Campaign

The vrusk invent ships capable of FTL travel while humans are at the conclusion of PL 6. If introduced in this type of campaign, the vrusk make first contact with Earth while humans are colonizing their solar system. While they view humans as occasionally irrational and unfocused, the vrusk are impressed by the progress of Earth's marketplace and immediately try to carve a profit niche in it themselves. This might cause feelings of paranoia among many humans who feel that the visitors are trying to financially take over their society (which, of course, is not the vrusk intention). Other humans embrace the opportunity to become successful by teaming with the enterprising insect species.

Far-Future Campaign

If introduced in this setting, vrusk make first contact with Earth shortly after humankind has developed their own FTL spaceships. They still try to integrate with the human marketplace as they would in a near-future campaign, but humans should feel on much more even ground with the visitors in this time period. Humans and vrusk in this setting might make many joint ventures into nearby star systems. If the Gamemaster is running a STAR FRONTIERS campaign, the vrusk guide the humans to the Frontier, where they introduce the humans and dralasites.

Roleplaying

The intimidating appearance of a vrusk is normally misleading. Vrusk are social creatures with a highly organized society. Vrusk are cunning at business and usually devote their entire lives to the company or organization for which they work. In turn, their company dictates where the vrusk lives, what type of career they have, who they associate with, and more. While most sentient races would find this arrangement intolerable, vrusk welcome the company interaction, and think of nonvrusk companies as weak and poorly structured.

Companies in vrusk society fall into two categories: conglomerates and trade houses. Conglomerates are organizations that employ all the skills necessary for the company to function with internal resources only. A conglomerate would have divisions dedicated to finance, legal, construction, sales, etc. A conglomerate rarely needs to hire out for a skill that is not already found internally. Trade houses, on the other hand, are highly specialized corporations that excel in one skill area. A single trade house might focus its entire business on travel arrangements, gridcaster manufacturing, or another specialized market. These organizations hire the needed

skills from other trade houses, who have working relationships with each other. For instance, a trade house that manufactures induction engines might hire another trade house to take care of their accounting.

Vrusk heroes often begin to treat the companions they adventure with as part of their company, and as such, family. When this type of trusting relationship is built, few allies can be better than a vrusk. Their dedication to the company they work for and their friends means more to them than personal safety. The common ideal vrusk lifestyle is to be successful in business and to live in peace and harmony. They usually avoid confrontational situations but aggressively defend and fight for the success of their company.

Naturally, vrusk heroes make excellent Diplomats. Since companies need all types of services, there are appropriate vrusk careers in other professions as well. Vrusk have the potential to make good Mindwalkers. Since this position is not commonly needed in most companies, however, finding vrusk dedicated to this practice is rare. Vrusk who take on a life of adventuring are either working for the good of their company or have left their company and the standard vrusk lifestyle behind, finding it too constricting.

Ability Score Range

Ability	**Range**
STR	4/12
DEX	7/15
CON	4/11
INT	8/15
WIL	4/14
PER	5/13

Free Broad Skills

Ability	**Skill**
Dexterity	Manipulation
Constitution	Stamina
Intelligence	Knowledge
Intelligence	Business
Will	Awareness
Personality	Interaction

Special Abilities

Ambidexterity: Vrusk automatically receive the perk Ambidextrous at no cost. This does not count against the hero's three perk maximum.

Comprehension: A vrusk is adept at understanding social interactions. This allows a vrusk hero the chance to understand a social dealing they observe that the player may not be able to decipher. Whenever the hero wants to attempt this ability, the player simply makes a Knowledge–*deduce* skill check at a +1 penalty. A success indicates the hero understands the nature of the social dealing.

For instance, Kli' Chik the vrusk is in a cantina and observes a human and a weren arguing at the next table. As the confrontation heats up, both adversaries stand up as if the situation could come to blows at any moment. The human faces the weren with poise and confidence, seemingly in control of the situation. A successful skill check by Kli' Chik reveals that the human is actually scared out of his wits, and his bravado is only on the surface.

Swimless: Vrusk do not breathe through their mouth, but respiration occurs through a series of holes called spiracles that run along their abdomen. This makes it impossible for vrusk to breathe while swimming, since the abdomen is almost entirely submersed.

Yazirian

A yazirian looks like a tall, slender ape with a lionlike mane surrounding its head and pointed ears. Unlike an ape, however, the posture of a yazirian is completely upright, similar to a human. A membrane of flesh akin to a flying squirrel runs along both sides of its body, extending from the hands down to its lower legs. When the yazirian raises its arms, this flap of skin is stretched taut and forms makeshift wings that can be used for gliding short distances. The entire body of a yazirian is covered with short, soft hair, with the exception of the lower arms and legs, where the hair is long and shaggy.

History

Yazirian society is centered around clans. These informal groups of related individuals were the cornerstone of early yazirian society but become less important later in their evolution. The history of the yazirian forest homeworld is filled with wars and skirmishes between rival clans. As the technology level of yazirians grew, the number of conflicts between clans fell. Cities began to spring up in the dense forests across the planet, giving rise to yazirian independence of the clans and the feuds that accompanied them. Yazirians pursued technological advancement with the same vigor they gave to the clan feuds, allowing them to emerge quickly into their Industrial Age. Eventually they developed FTL travel, though there is speculation that the yazirian designers secretly used technology from an alien spacecraft that crashed on their planet. Now capable of interstellar travel, large groups of yazirian colonists immediately began to explore and colonize the nearby systems.

Far-Future Campaigns

Since yazirians did not invent FTL spaceships until shortly after Earth created their own, yazirians can be encountered only in post-FTL campaigns. Despite their brutal past, yazirians have long since evolved past their warlike nature and peacefully and optimistically approach first contact with other species. Yazirians and humans have much in common, and these two species generally get along well.

Roleplaying

The yazirians are an energetic species, driven by a strong passion for life. While highly motivated to the task at hand, yazirians are characteristically short-tempered. Yazirians are quick to make decisions and even quicker to act upon them. This attitude makes them excellent Combat Specs and Free Agents, but few are suited to fill the roll of a Diplomat. While many make good Tech Ops, some find this profession not dynamic enough to motivate them.

One of the oldest traditions in yazirian culture is that of choosing a "life-enemy." Classically, a life-enemy was a rival clan. As yazirian civilization grew, many other adversaries are chosen as life-enemies. For instance, a soldier might choose the sathar as a life-enemy, while a trader might choose a competitor. The goal of a yazirian is to defeat, in one way or another, his life-enemy. The soldier might simply desire to eradicate all sathar, while the trader tries to overcome his competitor in business. While most yazirians still follow this tradition,

choosing a life-enemy is not necessary for ALTERNITY heroes.

Ability Score Range

Ability	Range
STR	4/12
DEX	8/16
CON	4/11
INT	4/14
WIL	6/15
PER	4/11

Free Broad Skills

Ability	Skill
Strength	Athletics
Strength	Unarmed attack
Dexterity	Acrobatics
Intelligence	Knowledge
Will	Awareness
Personality	Interaction

Special Abilities

Night Vision: Yazirians' eyes are highly sensitive to light, allowing them to see in dim light as well as a cat. This sensitivity causes bright light to be uncomfortable, and yazirians must wear dark goggles when in sunlight or in settings of intense illumination. Those who do not have protective goggles in these instances suffer a +2 penalty to all actions that rely on Dexterity.

Battle Rage: The adrenal gland in a yazirian is powerful and unpredictable. At the start of a scene in which a yazirian enters melee combat, this gland sometimes releases large doses of potent adrenaline into the creature's system. This causes a condition known as "battle rage," in which the yazirian attacks with a near berserk fury. Most who have seen a yazirian enter battle rage do not relish the idea of seeing it again. Whenever a yazirian enters close quarter combat, the player should make a preliminary skill check against the yazirian's Melee Weapon or Unarmed Attack skill (whichever is appropriate for the situation). If the result score is Amazing, the yazirian falls into battle rage. While in this state, the yazirian receives a –3 bonus to all melee or unarmed attacks. (Battle rage does not enhance ranged weapon attacks.) The check for battle rage is made only once, but it lasts until the end of the Combat Scene.

Gliding: The membranes on a yazirian's side allow them to glide short distances. A yazirian can glide one meter for every one meter of height they leap from in G2 gravity conditions. This distance can be tripled in environments with a gravity rating of G1. Gliding cannot be attempted on planets with gravity ratings of G3 or higher.

The yazirian can also reduce or entirely negate falling damage by using these membranes to slow their descent. Yazirians receive a –3 bonus to the Acrobatics—*fall* skill check.

Sathar

The segmented, wormlike body of the sathar averages about 3.5 meters in length. A majority of the length rests on the ground, allowing it to slither like a snake, while keeping the front 1.5 meters of its body vertical. Sathar have distinct heads with one eye on either side and a round, tooth-filled mouth similar to a lamprey. The milky eyes of a sathar each have two pupils that provide a much larger field of vision than most creatures enjoy.

Four tentacles serve as appendages for a sathar. Two one-meter-long tentacles on its upper body function as arms. At the end of each of these limbs are four smaller tentacles that play the role of fingers. Two additional tentacles sprout from the lower part of the sathar's body to serve as legs. These legs have larger, flattened pads for feet. These legs are not normally used for locomotion, since sathar movement consists of a slither, but rather help to stabilize the top part of the creature while standing upright. The brownish-yellow skin of a sathar is covered with a thin layer of mucus that keeps the skin moist and protects it while slithering.

History

It is only by a narrow margin that the sathar did not destroy their entire species ages ago. Since the sathar had only simple tools and weapons, they have been at war. Originally, two species of intelligent life evolved on the sathar home world: the sathar and a reptilian humanoid species known as the setarian. Eventually, the sathar succeeded in annihilating the setarian. At that point, they turned their aggressions toward each other. Many sathar factions, called cadres, sprung into existence and began to war with each other. These hostilities continued for hundreds of years until, eventually, one of the more prominent cadres rose to power and held the entire species under military control. Retaliation from the other cadres proved unsuccessful, and eventually the sathar accepted the new leadership and became a loosely united species. Although hostilities ceased, the cadre structure remained. Technology then advanced at an enormous rate, as the sathar set their sites on conquering the stars rather than each other. Originally, the sathar intention was simply to expand their species. This goal quickly changed to one of interstellar domination, however, when they discovered intelligent life on other planets.

Contemporary Campaigns

An encounter with sathar in this type of campaign would be something out of an alien invasion movie. The first sathar to arrive would cautiously and covertly learn all they could about humans and other species. This would include monitoring radio transmissions, observing native life, and even abducting natives for study and

testing. Sightings of sathar scout ships and some isolated encounters with the sathar would occur. When they feel comfortable with their ability to conquer the natives, the sathar forces swiftly and violently assault the planet. Although humankind is at a technological disadvantage in this campaign setting, their greater numbers and tenacity make them a powerful adversary to the sathar invaders.

Near Future/Far Future Campaigns

While humans and sathar are at nearly even technology levels in this setting, an encounter with the sathar is no less hostile. By this age, humans and other species have reached out into space and might be traversing the stars. Thus, it is likely that first contact with the sathar in this setting occurs not on earth but in the depths of space. Sathar might be slightly more cautious of species advanced enough to have FTL travel, but the sathar inevitably try to conquer them as well. With other species traveling among the stars, the sathar go to great lengths to keep the location of their home planet secret. Sathar never negotiate, regardless of their situation, and interrogation attempts reveal no useful information.

Roleplaying

Most sathar are extremely militaristic and warlike. Many speculate that without an enemy and their constant drive to conquer, sathar society would again turn on itself and collapse. Sathar are commonly evil and amoral, unscrupulously wiping out entire populations to obtain their resources and land, or simply for the sake of battle.

The concept of family has no meaning in sathar society. All sathar are organized into military groups called cadres. The worms dedicate their life to the cadre, which becomes both their family and career. Gender does not exist among sathar, as each is hermaphroditic. Procreation in a sathar cadre serves the sole purpose of creating new soldiers, and these soldiers are trained from their infancy.

As a general rule, sathar should normally be allowed in the game only as supporting cast. At the Gamemaster's option, however, players may be allowed to run a sathar hero. These rare sathar would invariably be outcasts from sathar society who left because they did not agree with society's malicious philosophies. Most sathar heroes would still possess some the warlike ambitions of their species, but they would be greatly curbed.

Ability Score Range

Ability	Range
STR	4/11
DEX	4/13
CON	4/11
INT	4/14
WIL	8/15
PER	7/14

Free Broad Skills

Ability	Skill
Dexterity	Vehicle Operation
Constitution	Stamina
Intelligence	Knowledge
Intelligence	Tactics
Will	Awareness
Personality	Interaction

Special Abilities

Hypnotism: A sathar who is able to converse with a character for ten minutes or longer in a noncombat setting has the innate ability to hypnotize them. The victim must be able to see and understand the sathar to be hypnotized. A sathar must achieve a Good or Amazing result in an Interaction—*charm* skill check (adjusted by the victim's Will resistance modifier) to successfully hypnotize someone. An Ordinary result fails to hypnotize the victim, but does not allow the victim to realize what the sathar is up to. A Marginal result indicates the character has seen through the sathar hypnotism attempt.

Limited Water Breathing: Sathar have no lungs but respire as earthworms do, by exchanging carbon dioxide for oxygen directly through the moist surface of their skin. This function allows for limited respiration underwater. Sathar can obtain enough oxygen from water to allow them to stay submerged for up to 30 minutes before coming up for air.

Converting Existing Characters

Conversion of old STAR FRONTIERS characters to the ALTERNITY game system is relatively simple. Regardless of whether you use the *Alpha Dawn* or *Zebulon's Guide* rules, follow these steps:

Profession

Simply select an ALTERNITY profession that matches your character's training and background. As a general rule, a STAR FRONTIERS character with a Military Primary Skill Area (PSA) should select a Combat Spec, Technological PSA should choose Tech Op, and those with the Biosocial PSA would normally select either a Tech Op or Diplomat as their profession. The background and function of some characters might make them more appropriate as Free Agents. A Gamemaster can help make the final judgment about what profession best suits these characters. The player can then select a Career for the hero.

Ability Scores

Use the **Ability Scores Conversion Table** to convert Ability Scores. Round up all fractions.

Skills

Most STAR FRONTIERS skills have similar counterparts in the ALTERNITY game that can be selected once the skill purchasing potential of a character is determined. As with all new ALTERNITY heroes, each

converted STAR FRONTIERS character receives a number of starting skill points determined by his or her Intelligence scores (see Table P5 in the ALTERNITY *Player's Handbook*). Thus, a yazirian with an Intelligence score of 9 would have 40 starting points to purchase skills.

Besides starting skill points, converted characters also receive achievement points according to the experience points (XP) they earned adventuring in the STAR FRONTIERS game system. To determine how many achievement points the hero should have to purchase skills due to previous adventuring, simply find the sum of all experience points the character spent on their STAR FRONTIERS skills, then divide by four (round down).

Example: *Yetrigar, a yazirian, has a STAR FRONTIERS PSA of Biosocial. His Level 3 Environmental skill requires 30 XP to earn, his Level 1 Medical costs a total of 5 XP, and his Level 2 Beam Weapons costs 18 XP. This gives Yetrigar a total of 53 experience points he earned under the STAR FRONTIERS rules. Yetrigar converts to the ALTERNITY game with 13 achievement points (53 ÷ 4 = 13, rounded down). This puts Yetrigar at Level 3 in the ALTERNITY game system, with 13 points to buy additional skills.*

Once these points are converted, a player can simply use his or her pool of points to purchase new ALTERNITY game skills. The skills chosen should reflect the abilities the character possessed in STAR FRONTIERS. For instance, those who possessed medical skills should purchase the Medical Science broad skill and associated specialty skills. Characters with the STAR FRONTIERS beam weapons skill should choose the Modern Ranged Weapons broad skill and any appropriate specialty skills. If possible, those who earned higher skill levels in STAR FRONTIERS should buy higher ranks in ALTERNITY specialty skills.

Action Checks and Durability

Once the Ability Scores are determined, simply reference Chapter 2: Hero Creation in the *ALTERNITY Player's Handbook* to determine durability, action check score, movement, actions per round, and other appropriate information.

Ability Score Conversion Table

ALTERNITY	STAR FRONTIERS
Strength	Strength ÷ 5
Dexterity	(Reaction Speed + Dexterity) ÷ 10
Constitution	Stamina ÷ 5
Intelligence	Logic ÷ 5
Will	Intuition ÷ 5
Personality	(Personality + Leadership) ÷ 10

New Equipment

With the vast expanse of worlds and alien species in the galaxy, there are endless possibilities for new equipment in the ALTERNITY game. The following is a description of equipment that many characters might have possessed in the STAR FRONTIERS game. All equipment described below has a weight of less than one kilogram.

Anti-Shock Implant

This tiny device is surgically implanted into the spine of the recipient at the base of the neck. Once implanted, it prevents all damage from stun-based weapons such as stun batons, stutter guns, and stun grenades.

A stun-based weapon is one that is capable of producing only stun damage. The antishock implant does not protect against a weapon that can produce both stun and wound damage.

The implant qualifies as cybernetic gear and costs two cyber tolerance points.

Progress Level: 6

Cost: 2,000 (Price does not include implantation; see surgery costs in the Cybertech chapter of the *Player's Handbook*.)

Chronocom

A chronocom is simply a short-range radio, watch, and calculator combined into a wrist-watch-like device. It has a communication range of 5 kilometers and scrambled, selectable frequencies to insure privacy. A chronocom has a rechargeable battery good for two full weeks of use.

Progress Level: 6

Cost: 200

Poly-Vox

This highly advanced, computerized device is worn around the neck and is designed to translate alien languages. When activated, the poly-vox translates and repeats all speech it hears. Thus a hero can speak in his own language and have it translated and repeated in the alien species' language (assuming the poly-vox is programmed with the language). All poly-voxes come automatically programmed with the languages for common species found in the *Player's Handbook*. At the Gamemaster's option, it may also come programmed with the languages of the new species found in this article.

If the poly-vox is not pre-programmed with a language it receives, it must first analyze and learn the language. For a poly-vox to learn a new language, it must first be programmed with key phrases of the language, which requires a successful Culture—*first encounter* skill check. An Ordinary success allows the poly-vox to be programmed in 100 hours, a Good result allows the user to accomplish programming in 50 hours, and an Amazing success demands only 10 hours. A Failure indicates the hero is unable to program the poly-vox to accept the new language. The poly-vox contains a rechargeable battery good for 200 hours of use.

Progress Level: 7

Cost: 3,000

Solvaway

The sole purpose of this chemical is to dissolve the polymer threads of a tangler grenade (see below). One vial of solvaway contains enough liquid to dissolve the threads of one tangler grenade.

Progress Level: 6
Cost: 30

Toxy-Rad Gauge

This sensor is usually worn on the wrist like a watch. It detects and measures nearby environmental dangers. The device indicates the surrounding atmospheric content, including poisonous gases and radioactivity. The gauge can be set to alert the wearer when any of these conditions exceed safety tolerance levels. It comes preprogrammed with all acceptable limits for all of the common species found in here and in the *Player's Handbook*, and it may be programmed to include other species as well.

Progress Level: 6
Cost: 75

New Weapons

Most of the weapons found in the STAR FRONTIERS rules have a similar counterpart in the ALTERNITY game. The laser pistol, laser rifle, fragmentation grenade, incendiary grenade, and other weapons that have identical names and descriptions in both settings. Simply convert directly over to the new game system. Other weapons have different names but essentially identical functions. The **Weapons Conversion** chart shows the relationships of these weapons.

Some STAR FRONTIERS weapons do not yet have equivalents in the ALTERNITY game. These are detailed below:

Sonic Sword

The sonic sword consists of a small, flashlight-shaped cylinder that, when activated, emits a one-meter long blade of intensely focused sound waves. This blade is incredibly powerful and can cut through solid steel. For game purposes, the sonic sword has statistics identical to those of a star sword. The weapon produces a high-pitched whine while functioning, making it a poor weapon for covert situations. Due to its reliance on sound waves to produce the blade, a sonic sword does not function within a vacuum.

Cost: 6,000
Progress Level: 7
Skill: Melee weapons—*powered*
Availability: Controlled

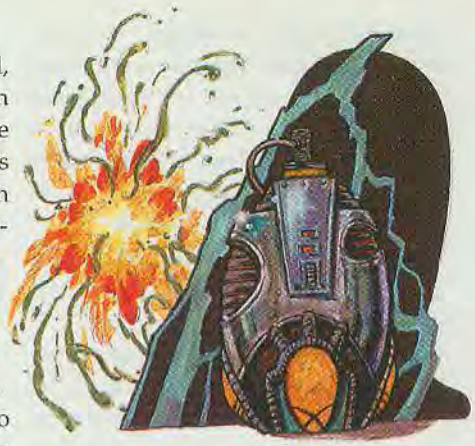
Needler Pistol

Although not particularly deadly, the needler pistol can be a painful and effective weapon. A miniature version of the scattergun, a needler fires clusters of 5-cm-long "needles" that are propelled at high velocities by an intense magnetic repulsion burst. This makes the needler a very quiet weapon, emitting no more than a weak "cough" when discharged. Two types of ammunition are available: anesthetic and barbed needles. Barbed needles contain numerous, tiny razor-sharp edges that inflict small, jagged wounds in the victim. Anesthetic needles do not inflict as much damage but are coated with a potent tranquilizer. Anyone struck by an anesthetic needle must immediately make a Resolve—*physical resolve* skill check. A Failure result causes the victim to mark off all remaining fatigue points and automatically suffer the effects of a knockout. An Ordinary success causes the victim to lose two fatigue points, a Good success forces a loss of only one, while an Amazing success means the victim can shrug off the effects of the anesthetic needle without any effects.

Progress Level: 6
Skill: Modern Ranged Weapons—*pistol*
Availability: Controlled

Tangler Grenade

Originally developed as a nonviolent method of capturing animals, the tangler grenade has become just as effective in combat situations. An exploding tangler



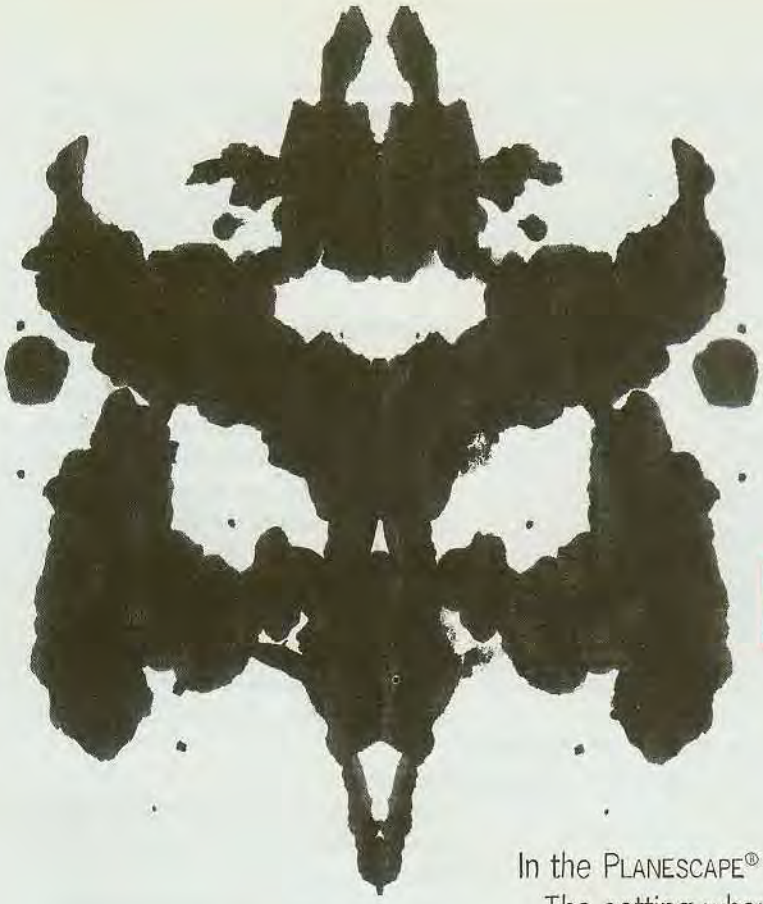
grenade discharges hundreds of strong, sticky polymer threads that adhere to everything they touch. The threads become semihardened immediately, capturing any victim trapped within them. A target's Acrobatics—*dodge* skill may be used to modify the attacker's success score with a tangler grenade attack. The severity of entanglement is determined by the attacker's Athletics—*throw* score. An Ordinary hit indicates that the threads only partially cover the victim, reducing movement by 25% and causing a +2 penalty on actions that require mobility. A Good hit reduces the victim's movement rate to 0 and gives a +3 modifier to any physical actions. An Amazing hit completely immobilizes the target and prevents any actions or attacks. It also covers firearms, rendering them useless. The polymers of a tangler grenade lose cohesiveness in 30 minutes, freeing anyone who was trapped within them. Large or powerful creatures might break free of tangler threads in one round, at the Gamemaster's option.

Progress Level: 6
Skill: Athletics—*throw*
Availability: Controlled

New Armor

The two types of protective clothing in the STAR FRONTIERS game are the skein-suit and albedo suit. In the ALTERNITY game, these convert into the CF softsuit and energy web, respectively.

Another type of protective device is the defensive screen. These screens are small, mechanized boxes normally worn on a belt. When activated, they tune into the unique electrochemical signature of the wearer and create a specialized force-field that surrounds and moves with the body. The field is thin, extending no



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New Ranged Weapons

Skill	Acc	Md	Range	Type	Damage (O/G/A)	Actions	Weight	Clip Size	Clip Cost	Hide	Cost
Needler Pistol	0	F/B	10/20/40	HI/O		3	1	10	20	+2	500
Barbed					d6s/d4w/d6+2w						
Anesthetic					d4s+anesthetic						
Tangler Grenade	+1	F	Per STR	N/A	Special	2	0.5	—	—	+3	200

Weapon Conversions

Star Frontiers Weapon	Alternity Equivalent
Automatic rifle	Rifle, 11mm charge
Gyrojet pistol	15mm rail pistol
Machine gun	Machine gun, .30 cal.
Needler rifle	Autoflechette shotgun
Rocket launcher	Bantam launcher
Shock gloves	Power cestus
Sonic devastator	Stutter cannon
Sonic stunner	Stutter pistol
Stunstick	Stun baton

more than four centimeters around the wearer's body. No two types of screens may be active on the same person at the same time, and screens do not work in conjunction with energy webs.

Defensive screens are powered by energy cells identical to those found in an ablative harness. A fully charged screen provides 50 points of protective energy. Defensive screens require a high amount of energy to function and drain 1 point of energy every round they are activated. In addition, all damage the screen prevents also drains a portion of this energy. For every stun point of damage negated, 1 point of energy is used; 2 points are drained for every point of wound damage absorbed; and 3 points for each mortal damage point absorbed. The power cell of a defensive screen can be recharged through any standard power source, requiring one hour of charging per 10 energy points restored.

All defensive screens are Progress Level 8 technology with the following statistics:

Skill: N/A
AP: 0
Type: O
Hide: +3
Weight: 1
Availability: Military
Cost: 4,000

Albedo Screen

This screen creates a shimmering, reflective field around the user. This field completely diffuses laser beams and negates damage to the wearer. The screen offers no protection against damage other than laser weapons but does protect against laser-based weapons such as the star sword. The mirrorlike field reflects only external blasts, allowing the wearer to fire laser blasts out of the field unhindered.

Gauss Screen

The field generated by a gauss screen provides the wearer total protection from electrical attacks. This includes damage from the pulse baton, stun baton, arc gun, quantum guns, and other electrical attacks. The protective field is invisible except for a bright flash when the screen is hit by an electrical attack.

Inertia Screen

An inertia screen creates a dampening field around the wearer that partially protects against all physical attacks. This damage includes all LI and HI melee and ranged weapons that use solid projectiles, blades, shrapnel, or similar types of attacks. The field does not protect against energy weapons or weapons that use electricity, sonic force, or similar methods to inflict damage. The inertia screen absorbs half of all damage inflicted by physical attacks, rounding up, draining its energy cell appropriately according to the amount of damage taken. The wearer suffers the other half of the damage.

Sonic Screen

Also known as a hush field, the sonic screen completely stops sound waves from passing through it. This effect negates damage from stutter guns, sonic swords, or other sound-based weapons. A hero inside a sonic screen can neither hear external noises nor be heard by those outside the field. These devices are used both to protect the wearer from sonic damage and to assist in situations in which stealth is required.

Steve Bartell is a TSR Online Rep living in Orem, Utah. He boldly claims to be the "biggest Alternity fan outside of Renton, WA," and is excited to see this article bring his two favorite roleplaying games together.

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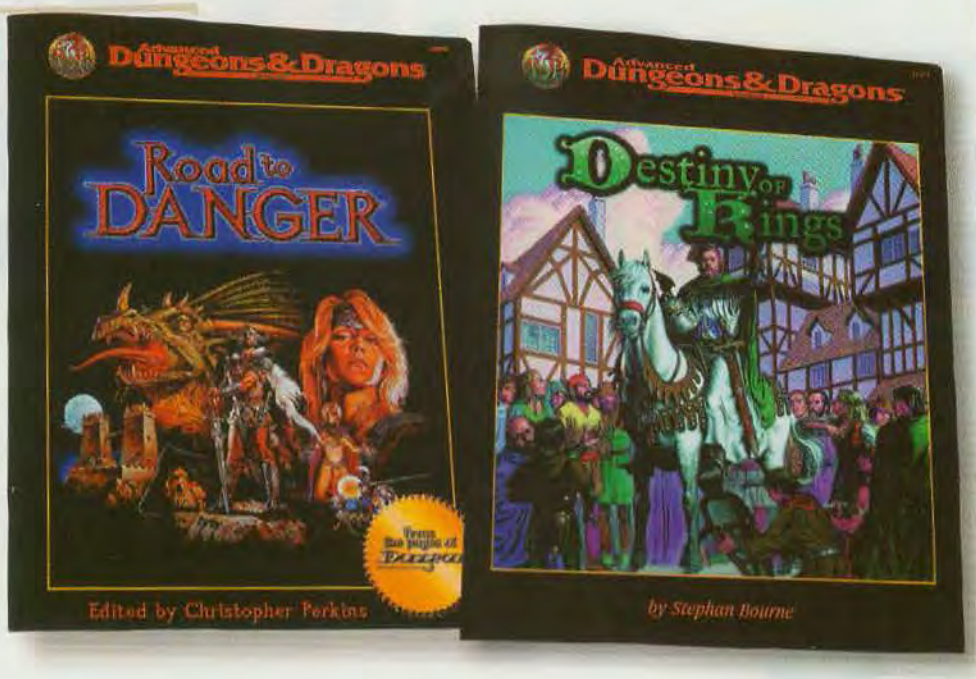

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Super Science in the Marvel Universe

"Hey Stretcho, this crazy gizmo really works!"

—Ben Grimm, the Thing

by Mike Selinker

Ben may sound incredulous, but every day the ever-lovin' blue-eyed Thing thanks his lucky stars that he has Reed Richards, A.K.A. Mister Fantastic, on his side. That's because when the going gets rough, Reed can always whip up some masterful doohickey that saves creation.

And Reed's not the only one. In the Marvel Universe, technological breakthroughs happen at the speed of thought—and in TSR's MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ Adventure Game, at the speed of your thought. On page 123 of the Game Book found in the base set, there's a simple action for making equipment: make an Intellect action opposed by the intensity of the device plus one point of difficulty for each extra power you want to give the item. But if you really dig the super-science, true believer, here's a more involved optional research system for you.

Invention Chart

Difficulty	Research	Distance	Duration	Effect	Intensity	Base trump
0 points	lifetime	user-only	instant	user-only	0	Strength
1 point	1 year	—	concentration	1 individual	1	—
2 points	1 month	striking	aura duration*	2 individuals	2	Agility
3 points	1 week	—	up to an hour	small group	3	—
4 points	1 day	firing	up to a day	large group	4	Intellect
5 points	1 hour	—	up to a month	building	5	—
6 points	1 minute	visual	up to a year	city block	6	Willpower
7 points	1 exchange	beyond visual	many years	city	7	—
8 points	instant	beyond Earth	forever	planet	8**	—

* Aura duration, as noted in the Game Book, requires a draw every exchange the device is active. If the aura on the card drawn is negative, the device ceases to function.

** One point of difficulty per point of intensity of the highest power.

The Value of Research

Research is an action that can create wondrous devices of all types, from flying cars to magical wands. Indeed, few of the wonders of the superheroic age would be distinguishable from sorcery to an Alpha Primitive.

An inventor visualizes the functions of the device he wishes to create. Through the application of scientific principle, he can create a machine that has the desired powers. This assumes the necessary resources are available, though a Gadgeteer can always disassemble another device to create a new one. The Narrator may always require the hero to fetch some component, often the hook to an adventure.

To create a gizmo, a hero must work against a difficulty set by the Narrator after listening to the inventor's plans. The inventor describes the device he wants to create—what it does, how far it can project, and so on—and the Narrator sets the difficulty according to the properties on the **Invention Chart**. The player then makes an Intellect action, modified by up to one science skill (–4 points of difficulty). If the action score equals or exceeds the Narrator's difficulty rating, the invention is a success.

Those who underestimate the difficulty of research are prone to disastrous errors. Young Victor von Doom discovered this when a rushed college experiment exploded, scarring his face and his psyche forever. Similarly, if the device is a failure (that is, the player did not generate a high enough action score), draw a card from the Fate Deck. On a Doom card, the device malfunctions or explodes, causing the intended intensity in damage to everyone within range.

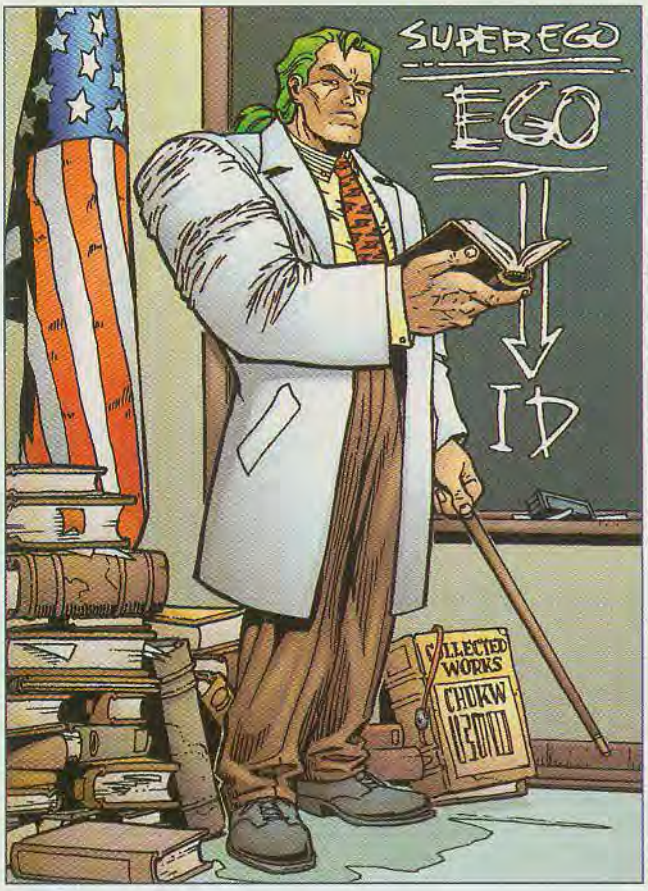
The **Invention Chart** allows for the creation of devices in amazingly short research times. However, a device created in less than a day is inherently unstable. If a Doom card is drawn as the Narrator's card during any exchange involving the device, the device malfunctions or explodes. Regardless of the end result, the device is destroyed.

You can use this system to create magical devices as well as technological ones. Use the hero's Magic intensity or Willpower score (whichever is lower) rather than Intellect to create the device. The hero must have the Occult skill to create magical devices.

Research Difficulties

The difficulty of an invention depends on research time, intended effect, and many other factors. The Narrator and player can use the **Invention Chart** to set a difficulty based on what the inventor wants to create and how much time is invested in the project; other considerations such as pressure and poverty may apply. All these factors are additive. If different powers of the device give different difficulty levels, use the highest difficulty possible.

Research time: Even men as brilliant as Reed Richards and Tony Stark don't create super suits or flying cars overnight. Every new technological challenge demands time to research the works of others and gather components.



Distance: The closer the device is to its user or target, the easier it is to build. Items intended to function at very long ranges carry much greater chances of failure. For example, creating a machine that shocks on touch is much less difficult that creating a machine that can blast lightning at visual distance.

Duration: If a device's effect is instantaneous, it can be built faster than an item intended to hold its energies for long periods. For example, a seal that binds a demon for a minute is easier to inscribe than one that holds it back forever. When the **Invention Chart** mentions "concentration," it means the user's concentration, not the device's.

Effect: If the device affects a large area or many people, it's harder to make than one that affects just the user or target. Approximate if necessary: A room, for example, roughly equals a small group, while a hockey crowd is about a city block.

Intensity: A device that duplicates a power at a certain maximum intensity has that intensity added to its difficulty. Use the highest intensity of all the powers in the device, plus one per power beyond the first. This can go all the way up to 30.

Base Trump: Some powers are far more difficult to simulate than others. When you're deciding which suit is trump for the item, consult the actual trump suits of the powers selected. Choose the one that adds the highest number of difficulty points to the difficulty of the construction. For example, Body Armor that also allows Fire Control uses Intellect instead of Strength for calculating difficulty.

Limits: Putting a significant limit on the device can lower its difficulty by 2 points per limit. Similarly, a device that gives a hindrance could lower its difficulty by the same amount.

Other Requirements: The Narrator can always add some other aspect of difficulty to the Intellect action required to invent the gizmo. For example, the construction of a time platform might be modified by how far back or forward the user can travel. Also, monetary cost and components could be involved at the Narrator's discretion, possibly leading to some investment or crime that could trigger an adventure.

Assistance: When super-scientists get together, they can make some amazing things (just ask the lunkheads in A.I.M.). When this occurs, the scientist with the highest Intellect score attempts the action, but each additional scientist with an appropriate skill lowers the difficulty of the device by 4 points.

A simple example might be a cold-blaster (Intellect-based, 4 points) taking a month of research time (2), reaching firing distance (4) with instant duration (0), affecting one individual (1) at intensity 10 (10). This totals to a difficulty of 4 + 2 + 4 + 0 + 1 + 10 = 21.

A more complex example would be a one-day rush to build a helmet that allows Invisibility 8, Mind Control 14, Telepathy 9, and Teleportation 12. Here, the difficulty is based on a day for research (4), visual distance (6), a duration of hours (4), affecting a small group (3), at a maximum intensity of 14 (14 + 3 for the other three powers), with a Willpower base trump (6, the highest of the possible options); also, a limit of not working in daylight is imposed (–2 difficulty). This makes the total difficulty 4 + 6 + 4 + 3 + 14 + 3 + 6 – 2 = a whopping 38 difficulty! Even with a 4-point deduction if the hero has an appropriate science skill (such as Bionics), this helmet is going to be a killer to make.

Research and Adventures

Of course, sitting around the lab all day doesn't always make for exciting adventures. But it sure can lead to some, if you're a bit inventive.

First, there's the "missing part" adventure. At a critical juncture, the super-scientist reexamines his or her blueprints and discovers that this device functions only if it is oiled with a viscous fluid that flows in the canals of Mars. Suddenly, a trip to Mars is required, and who knows what the Martians will think of people stealing their precious oils?

Second, you can always bring in the competition. If your hero's on the verge of a technological breakthrough, somebody probably wants to beat the hero to the punch, or at least beat the hero to a pulp. This competition could turn into a race, a battle to wrest the technology away, or even sabotage.

Third, no one ever wants a powerful device to fall into the wrong hands. Some criminals and terrorists wait until the device is finished before attempting to steal it. While the hero is up to his or her neck in frammistats, the bad guys are kidnapping the hero's beloved pet and preparing their ransom demands: You guessed it, they'll trade the dog for the device.

Fourth, you can bring in a mysterious patron. Someone sinister could be backing the research. This could be a faceless and unscrupulous corporation like Roxxon or the Cord Conglomerate, or a disguised super-villain like Doctor Doom or Ultron. Here, the hero has unwittingly helped the forces of evil, and now must rectify the error by retrieving or destroying his or her own creation.

High-tech Powerhouses

In the millennial Marvel Universe, superbeings possess technology far more advanced than that of our world. Flying cars, cyberware, power armor, and many other wonders abound in the hands of superhumans. For that, they can thank a few public sources and a great many private ones.

America's most futuristic tech firm is New York's Fantastic Four International, headed by Reed Richards. Mister Fantastic shares some technological advances with private concerns but has kept his most amazing inventions—time machines, portals to other dimensions, and so forth—under tight guard. One of his most impressive creations, a fabric of unstable molecules, is a favorite among the superheroic profession, as it adapts to the wearer's own superpowers.

The biggest high-tech firm in America is New York's Stark solutions, headed by Anthony Stark. Formerly a high-profile weapons supplier for the Pentagon, Stark now makes fantastic biotech and cybernetics. Stark Solutions leads the world in powered armor development, and the latest model is always showcased by Iron Man, Stark's "bodyguard." Stark once owned Stark International, which was eventually taken over by Stane Industries, formerly headed by Obadiah Stane; since Stane's suicide, the company has faltered. The Fujikawa Corporation, a Japan-based multinational, seized control of SI in the wake of the Onslaught disaster.

Much great technology comes from government agencies, especially those with "black" defense budgets. Probably the most advanced defense organization on Earth is Washington, D.C.'s semicovert Strategic Hazard Intervention Espionage Logistics Directorate. S.H.I.E.L.D. has in its arsenal Life Model Decoys (robots that emulate human beings) and helicarriers (flying battleships loaded with armaments). Close behind is Canada's

Department H, which uses its technology to strengthen Canada's contingent of superbeings.

Upstate New York's Project Pegasus, the Potential Energy Group/Alternate Sources/United States, is a leading energy research institution specializing in unexplored power sources such as cosmic energy. The group formerly housed captured super-criminals, but that responsibility went to the cutting-edge incarceration complex of The Vault, in the Colorado Rockies.

Metallurgical research has advanced in the African nation of Wakanda, the discovery site of Wakandan Vibranium, a metal that absorbs vibrational energy. Mixtures of that metal with Antarctic Vibranium, which dissolves metal, and Adamantium, the hardest substance on Earth, have been attempted; the latter mixture created Captain America's unique shield.

Antimutant technology is a new and regrettable branch of science. The most stunning genetic advances can be found in the African nation of Genosha, but closer to home, D.C.'s Shaw Industries is the major supplier of the powerful mutant-hunting robots, the Sentinels. Working for the Defense Department, the techno-mutant Forge invented mutation-nullifying weaponry.

At least three technological giants seek to take over the world. The most advanced is Latverian monarch Victor von Doom. However, for sheer numbers, the power belongs to Advanced Idea Mechanics (A.I.M.), a cabal of weapons-bartering renegade scientists. A.I.M. was once part of HYDRA, the fascist techno-cult of Baron Wolfgang von Strucker. Other tech created by villains includes Baron Zemo's super-strong Adhesive X and the Wizard's antigrav disks.

But far and away the most radical tech created by a 20th century human comes from the much-accelerated High Evolutionary, who created a new planet called Counter-Earth. His whereabouts are unknown, but where his inventions appear, all scientists stop and take notes.

Finally (and this one's a classic), there's always the disastrous mistake. If the device fails (or even if it succeeds), it can explode, gain evil sentience, unleash a powerful demon, open a portal to a dangerous dimension, or teleport the scientist into an extra-planar prison. The science-obsessed hero then learns a valuable lesson: technology, bringer of much that is good in our lives, can just as easily bring misery.

Of course, this knowledge won't stop the a true hero from trying again.

Mike Selinker would like to thank Bill Olmesdahl for inspiration in writing this article.

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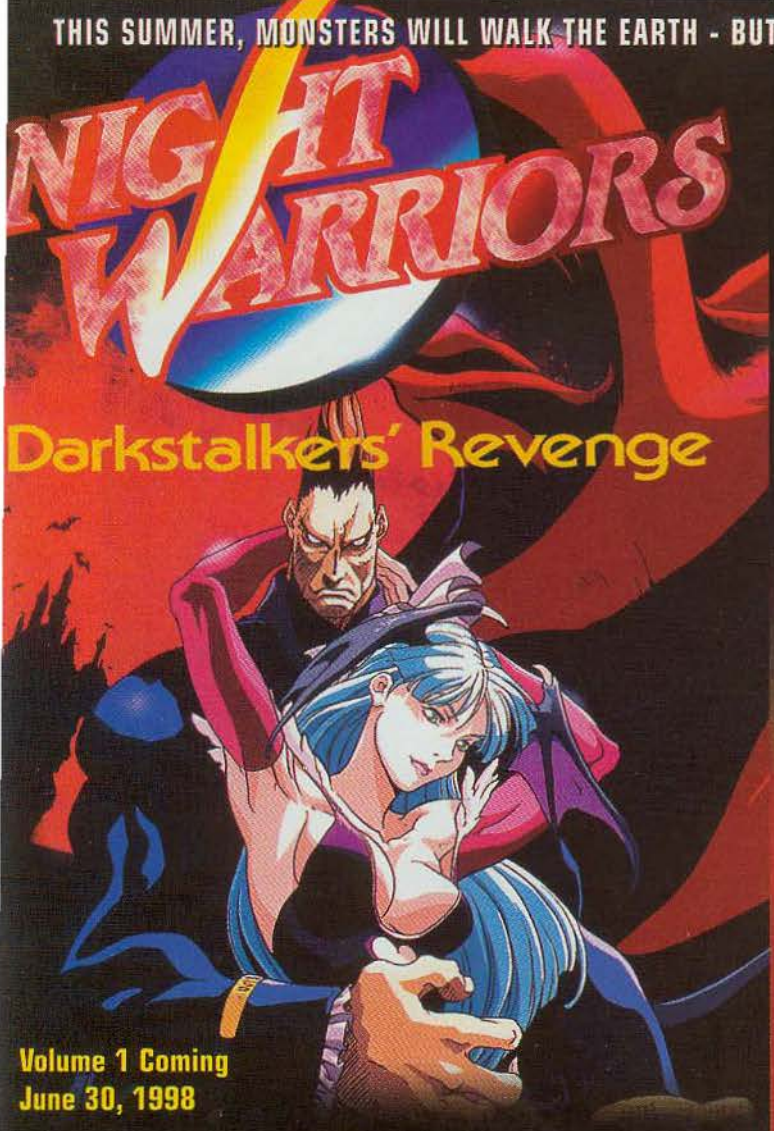

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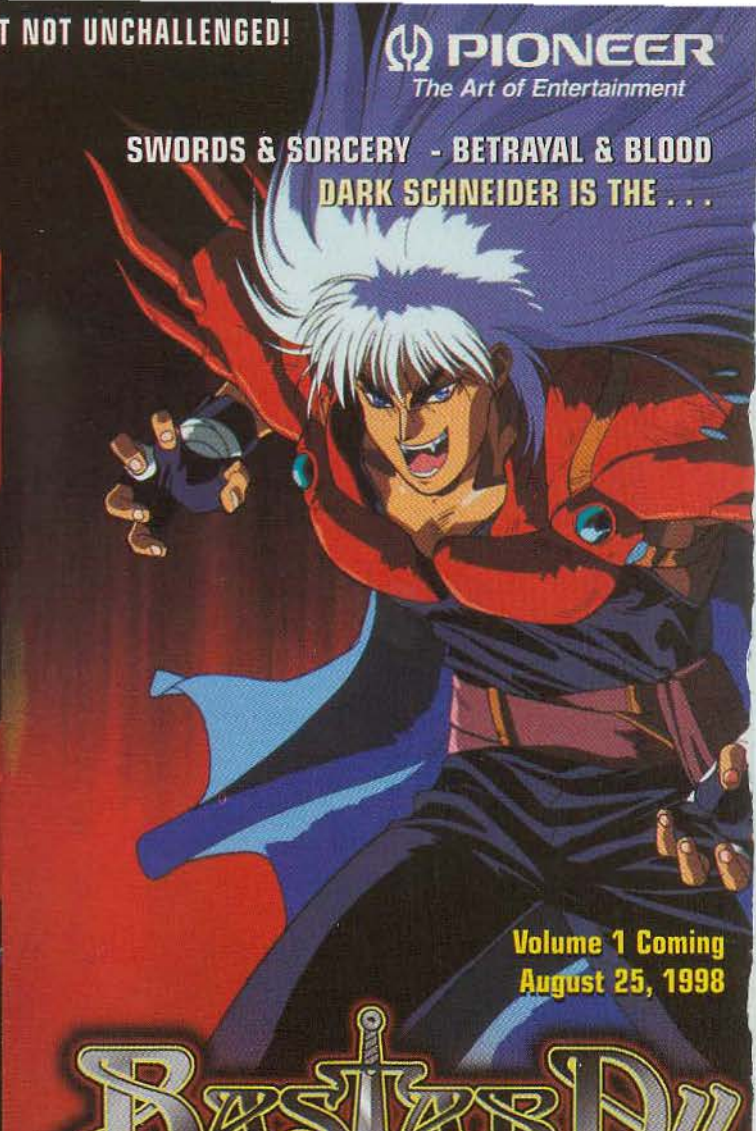

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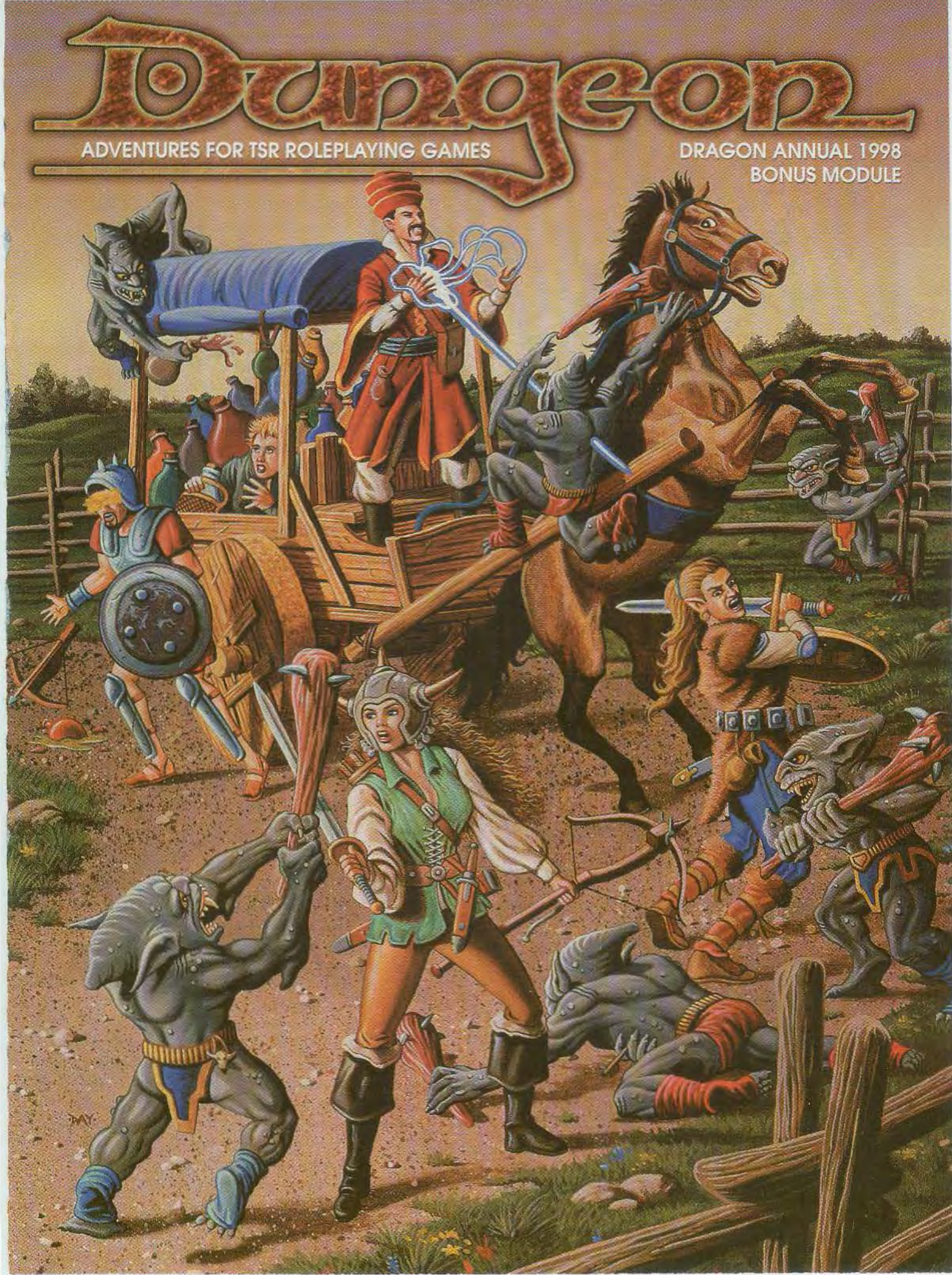


HANDLE WITH CARE

BY RON POIRIER

This could be your big break

Artwork by David Day and Terry Dykstra

Ron is a teacher in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. His first published adventure, "Savage Beast," appeared in DUNGEON® Adventures *#55.*

"Handle With Care" is an AD&D® game adventure designed for a party of 4–6 1st-level characters. It can fit easily into any campaign that includes at least one large city containing a wizards' guild. A party with a wizard PC may have more of a reason to embark on this short adventure, but the presence of a wizard PC is not necessary. Ideally, any party helping Elarius should be good in overall alignment; the wizard is far too shrewd to seek aid from any group with a reputation for lawless and uncouth behavior!

The scenario could easily be used for a smaller group of higher-level adventurers, although the DM should strengthen the opposition by equipping Virgil Brennan with useful one-shot magical items, such as potions or scrolls.

Beginning the Adventure

At the start of the adventure, the PCs should be in the city of Redport, or another city appropriate to the DM's campaign world. Perhaps they met only recently, having come by various routes to the "big city" with dreams of finding their fortunes; then again, they could be old friends who have already gained some small recognition due to one or two successful adventures. In any event, they soon find themselves speaking to a man named Elarius Goldstaff, a mage in need of some assistance.

Elarius is a well-dressed man with a gold-capped oaken staff and a broad, smiling face. The embroidered sigils on his red robes identify him as a member of the College of the Crimson Eye, a respected gathering of mages centered in Redport.

About two months ago, Elarius was granted the title of "Procurer" by the Masters of the College. This new position means that he is responsible for obtaining alchemical equipment, minor spell components, and other items that the college needs to function. While this task might seem almost demeaning for a wizard, it is a respected minor office within

the college, and those who wish to join the ranks of the Masters must pass through such positions on their way up.

Ordinarily, Elarius' work does not demand that he leave the city; Redport is one of the largest centers of trade and commerce in the area, and most of the college's needs can be met by the local merchants. There are certain items and substances, however, that are not always available in Redport; it is the Procurer's responsibility to travel every now and then to gather them. The time has come for Elarius to do just this, and he is looking for trustworthy individuals to act as bodyguards.

If the PCs have not yet gained any recognition in Redport, they do not initially meet Elarius in person but instead see notices posted on the street or in a tavern requesting the services of "honorable and trustworthy guards" to accompany Elarius on his travels. The notices contain a sketched map detailing the route that Elarius plans to take, along with a promise of "payment in gold," although no specific amount is mentioned. Interested parties are directed to meet with Elarius Goldstaff at the College of the Crimson Eye.

If the PCs have already completed one or more successful adventures, Elarius has heard of them and approaches them directly with an offer of work. He might meet with them at an inn, run into them while they are shopping for goods, or even accost them on the street. In any event, the DM should play Elarius as a cheerful, goodhearted fellow, quick to laugh and possessed of an infectious merriment; he is quite charismatic for a wizard, one of the reasons the Masters picked him to be the new Procurer in the first place.

The DM must determine how far Elarius must travel to procure all of the items on his list, and how many towns and villages he must visit. The length of Elarius' journey affects the amount of money he is willing to pay the PCs to accompany him. For a short journey of a couple of days, visiting one large town and a small village, he is willing to pay the PCs as much as 25 gold pieces each up front, and a like amount of gold when they return to Redport. If the PCs turn up their noses at such a seemingly small amount of gold, the DM may remind them that this is considerably higher than the wages of a teamster or even a soldier. Additionally, any mages in the party realize that it might be to their advantage to impress an official in the College of the Crimson Eye, especially if they are seeking entry into its ranks. Elarius certainly hints that he might be willing to vouch for any PC mages who wish to join the college, provided they prove themselves trustworthy and resourceful.

Elarius has already prepared a wagon pulled by a massive draft horse, so he is ready to leave in the morning of the day following his initial meeting with the PCs. This is the first time that he has had to travel to perform his duties, and he is quite eager to prove himself to his superiors at the college.

Elarius Goldstaff (5th-level human mage): AL LG; AC 8 (bracers); MV 12; W5; hp 12; THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 10, C 12, D 12, I 15, W 10, Ch 15; ML 12; *quarterstaff +1, bracers of defense AC 8, potion of healing,* dagger, spellbook, embroidered robes, spectacles, spyglass, 2 lbs. of cinnamon sticks.

Elarius typically travels with the following spells memorized: *magic missile* (×2), *alarm, shield; levitate, mirror image; lightning bolt.* In addition, he knows the following spells, all of which are in his spellbook: *mending, cantrip, detect magic, read magic, comprehend languages, shrink; knock, scare, web, Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter; dispel magic, fly, suggestion, tongues.*

Elarius has the following nonweapon proficiencies: brewing (15), reading/writing (Common), astrology (15), engineering (12), herbalism (13), swimming (10). At the start of the journey, Elarius uses his astrology proficiency to gain insight on what to expect in his travels, but he is unable to learn anything.

Traveling with Elarius

Assuming that the PCs agree to Elarius' terms, they begin traveling in the morning after buying and packing last-minute items like perishable foods, small tents, and so forth. Because Elarius' wagon is pulled by a strong but slow draft horse, the PCs do not need riding horses of their own to keep up. In fact, up to two people may ride in the wagon while the others walk. (Elarius begins the journey riding but offers his seat in a fair rotation with the other characters.)

During the course of their journey, the characters discover that Elarius has a habit of chewing rolled "sticks" made from dried cinnamon bark as he travels. He is also fond of telling long stories about his own days as an apprentice in the College of the Crimson Eye, especially while he is riding in the wagon as opposed to walking on foot.

Elarius should also distinguish himself from typical NPCs by way of his quirky sense of humor; he is slightly inclined toward practical jokes, particularly those involving the *cantrip* spell. If he feels that he is on good enough terms with the PCs to get away with it, he attempts to go through his small repertoire of jokes. These jokes include sneaking up behind a PC to "zap" them with an electrical discharge that causes no real injury, turning a PC's hot porridge a brilliant purple color, and summoning annoying, loud-buzzing flies to orbit a PC's head, just out of reach. It should be noted that there is no malice intended in these jokes, and if anyone takes offense at them, Elarius is quick to apologize and pesters the PCs no longer. Should enterprising PCs attempt to play their own jokes on Elarius, they find that he can take them as well as he can dish them out. In fact, he enjoys a good ribbing now and then, and PCs who pull an exceptional prank on him earn an odd sort of respect from him.

Wandering Encounters

If the DM wishes, the PCs may have one or more adventures while traveling with Elarius before they are ambushed by Virgil Brennan (see below). The DM is cautioned to bear two things in mind, however, when planning for this event.

First, players prefer to have their characters be the center of attention, and Elarius is probably of significantly

higher level than they; therefore, it would be wise to keep Elarius out of such adventures, lest he overshadow the PC heroes. Since Elarius is occupied in locating and purchasing equipment whenever he stops in a town or village, it would be quite easy for a DM to get him out of the action at these times. Elarius expects the PCs to remain nearby, however (at least to keep an eye on the wagon), so their adventures should be limited to those that take place within the confines of the town or village in which they are staying.

The second thing the DM should bear in mind when planning adventures for the PCs while they travel with Elarius is that the PCs should still be 1st or 2nd level when they are ambushed by Virgil Brennan (see below), so they should not have too many adventures before they return to Redport.

That said, it is up to the DM to decide whether he or she wishes the PCs to have any wandering monster encounters during their travels with Elarius.

The Adversary

While Elarius Goldstaff is a fairly good-natured, likable fellow, he has made some enemies over the course of his lifetime. One of these is Virgil Brennan, his cousin and another member of the College of the Crimson Eye. Elarius' mother is Virgil's aunt, and the two have known each other since childhood. As a child, Virgil was slender, pale, and withdrawn; he has not changed much since then, but his talent with the magical arts has given him a subtle, sly arrogance. He was bullied by larger boys when he was younger because he was quiet and small, and he now delights in using his powers quietly to establish dominance over anyone noticeably larger and stronger than him.

While Elarius has never taunted Virgil, he has nonetheless earned the ire of his cousin. Two months ago, the Masters of the College selected him to be the new Procurer—an office that Virgil had sought for himself. As a wizard specializing in the school of Conjuration, Virgil feels he is superior to any "mere generalist mage," especially Elarius, whom he considers a blowhard and a buffoon.

Virgil's pride was deeply wounded by the Masters' decision. Over the last two months, his jealousy has made him resentful of his cousin, who is generally well liked by the rest of the college. Refusing to see that Elarius has been doing a fine job, Virgil considers the Masters' decision unsound, and he means to show them the error of their ways by causing his cousin's errand to end in a humiliating catastrophe. Virgil hopes that, if Elarius fails to return with the equipment he set out to procure, the Masters of the College will reconsider their choice of Procurer and bestow the title on him, instead.

It is important to note that while Virgil is quite self-centered and uncaring, he is not truly evil in the purest sense of the word. Furthermore, while Virgil wishes to humiliate and harm his cousin politically, he does not wish to cause him or anyone else any bodily harm. The DM should keep these points in mind as he runs the ambush encounter described below.

Virgil Brennan (5th-level human conjurer): AL N(E); AC 2/7 (see below); MV 12; W5; hp 18; THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 7, C 15, D 15, I 16, W 11, Ch 10; ML 12; XP 975; *robe of protection +2, figurine of wondrous power (ebony fly)*, dagger, sling, spellbook, embroidered robes, 1 lb. of cinnamon sticks, 120 gp, 25 sp.

Virgil has the following spells memorized on the day he sets out to ambush Elarius and the PCs: *mount, unseen servant, change self* (×2), *wall of fog; silence 15' radius*, choke**, glitterdust; monster summoning I, tongues.*

* Spell from *The Complete Bard's Handbook.* Identical to the second-level priest spell from the *Player's Handbook.*

** Spell from *The Complete Wizard's Handbook.* Replace with *bind* or *ray of enfeeblement* if not using that book.

In addition to these spells, Virgil has previously cast the spell *invisible mail* on himself. Virgil's spell gives him an armor class of 2 (adjusted for Dexterity) and absorbs up to 5 hit points of damage before being dispelled, at which point Virgil's armor class drops to 7 (due to his magical robes and high Dexterity).

Virgil's spellbook contains several other spells, but it is not detailed here. Rather, the DM may flesh out Virgil's spell list as he sees fit if he becomes a recurring NPC in the campaign, bearing in mind that Virgil is a conjurer.

Virgil has the following nonweapon proficiencies: reading/writing—Common (17), spellcraft (14), herbalism (14), ancient history (15), swimming (7), artistic ability—painting (11), etiquette (10). In addition, he can speak, read, and write one other human language appropriate to the campaign.

Virgil is never without his familiar, Jack, a particularly obnoxious blue jay with a penchant for screaming at people Virgil doesn't like (from the safety of the trees, of course). Jack has been enhanced with magic, so in addition to the abilities of an ordinary familiar, he also has an Intelligence of 10 and the ability to cast the equivalent of one *unseen servant* and one *change self* spell each day. For a more detailed explanation of the spells used to enhance Jack, the DM should refer to the article "That's Certainly Unfamiliar!" in *DRAGON Magazine* issue #181 (May 1992); Virgil has cast the spells *familiar enhancer I* and *familiar enhancer II* on Jack.

Jack (blue jay familiar): INT: Average; AL N(E); AC 7; MV 1, Fly 36 (B); hp 8; THACO 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA/SD Spells; SZ T; ML 6; XP 65.

The Ambush

Virgil has had plenty of time to plot, plan, and scheme, and he has used his connections in the College of the Crimson Eye to learn as much as he can about the details of Elarius' planned travel route. (Alternately, he might simply have acquired one of the notices that Elarius posted around Redport that included a rough map of his journey.) He has hit upon what he feels to be a foolproof plan for thoroughly humiliating Elarius—he will use his powers of conjuration to summon up a small band of monsters to waylay the wagon and destroy as much of the equipment as possible. The bitter Virgil is already gleefully anticipating his cousin's sheepish return to the college with a wagonload of broken glass and ruined spell components.

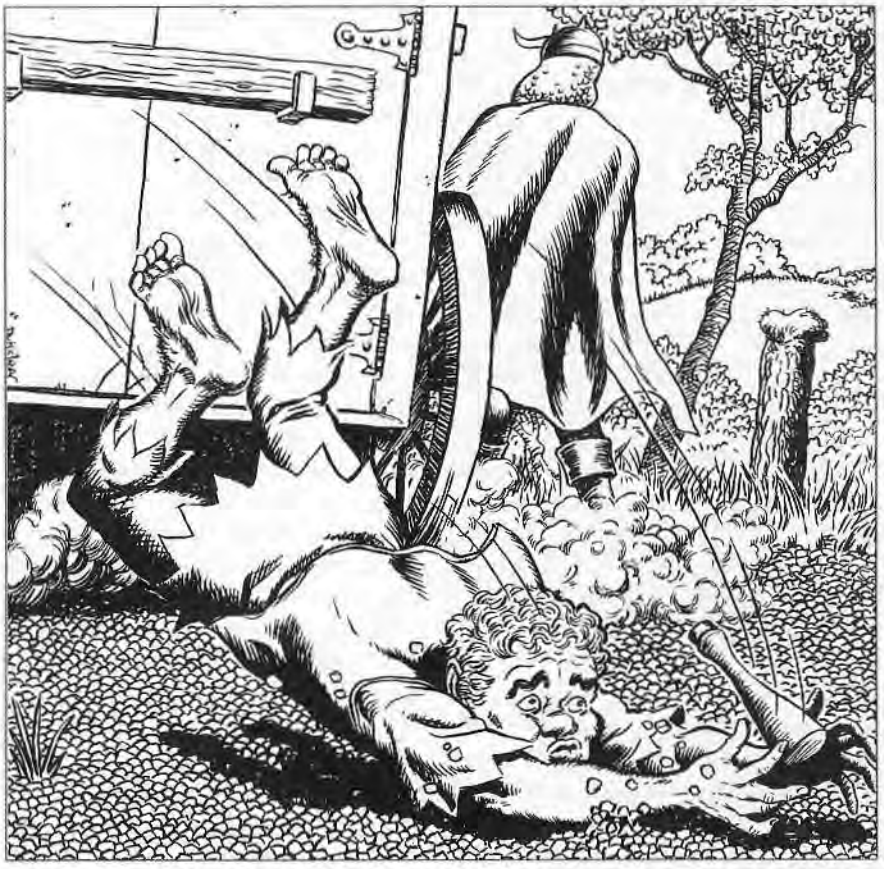
When Elarius and the PCs arrive in the last community they are to visit before returning to Redport, Virgil is there waiting for them. He does not, however, make his presence known when they arrive. Instead, he has purchased a room at a local inn while under the effects of a subtle *change self* spell and remains in his room from the afternoon the PCs arrive until the morning that they leave. (Their last stop is a brief, one-day affair.)

During their stay, Jack flits about the community, keeping an eye on the wagon, and is not noticed unless the PCs specifically state that they are paying attention to the presence of any small birds in the area. As soon as Elarius and the PCs leave town, Jack flies directly to Virgil's window and informs him of their departure. Virgil waits about an hour before leaving the inn and walking out of the community.

Once out of sight of the community, Virgil casts his *mount* spell to summon a light riding horse so that he can overtake the wagon. He then travels in the direction that the PCs went until Jack (who scouts ahead) warns him that he is very close. At this point, he casts one of his *change self* spells to appear as an elf dressed in forest greens, and he races his horse as fast as it will go to pass the wagon before the illusion wears off. At this point, the DM should read or paraphrase the following description:

You have been traveling toward the city of Redport for about an hour and a half, and you seem to be making good time. Elarius has not yet congratulated you on a job well done, but you can see in his eyes that he is pleased with you. He hums a light, happy song as he chews thoughtfully on a cinnamon stick, perched atop the now-full wagon with reins in hand.

Suddenly, Elarius turns his head and glances back; a second later, you hear what he does. The rapid galloping of a running horse closes from the distance behind you. As you turn to look, you see a cowled elf astride a lean, brown horse racing toward you, gaining on you and your wagon with every passing second. Wherever this elf is going, he seems to be in an awful hurry; as he nears you, the elf leans forward in the saddle and spurs his horse on, swerving slightly off the path to avoid crashing into your wagon.



Virgil does not stop to speak with Elarius or the PCs and ignores them if they hail him. Elarius does not seem overly suspicious of the "elf," shrugging as the horse thunders away and wondering aloud why the elf is in such a hurry. Again, unless the PCs are specifically on the lookout for small birds, they do not notice Jack flying above the treetops, following his master.

Once he has gotten sufficiently ahead of the PCs, Virgil dismounts and leads his horse up over a small ridge and into the woods to the side of the road. After tying the summoned steed to a tree out of sight of the road, Virgil finds a nice spot overlooking the road, where he can hide in the undergrowth. Here he waits, while Jack perches in a nearby tree, keeping an eye out for the wagon.

Once Jack sees the PCs approaching, he mentally alerts Virgil. Before the wagon arrives on the scene, Virgil casts his remaining *change self* spell to appear once more as an elf with green clothing, then he casts *tongues* and *monster summoning I*. Luckily for Virgil, he manages to summon some fairly intelligent creatures—norkers.

Norkers (one for each PC, including Elarius, up to a maximum of 8): INT average 9; AL CE; AC 3; MV 9; HD 1+2; hp 7 each; THACO 19; #AT 2; Dmg 1-3/1-6; SZ M; ML 20; XP 35; *MC5*.

Although Virgil has no idea what a norker is, this does not stop him from proceeding with his plan. He uses his *tongues* spell to speak with the norkers, ordering them to keep quiet and hide until they see the passing wagon, at which point they rush out and destroy all of the wagon's cargo. In the following round, the wagon rolls into view, and the DM should read or paraphrase the following description:

Sidebar 1: Norker Attacks

1	Hurl glass flask or jar for 1–2 hp damage
2	Attempt to "break" alembic stand, pestle, etc. on PC; attack causes 1–3 hp damage
3–4	Throw crate for 2–5 hp damage
5	Throw toxic chemicals in PC's face; on a successful hit, PC must save vs. poison or be stunned, blinded, and gagging for 2–5 rounds
6	Hurl flask of acid; treat as a grenade-like missile causing 2–8 hp acid damage on a successful hit, with 1–3 hp slash damage (which might harm the norker)

It has been about an hour since you were passed on the road by the racing elf, and you have all but forgotten the incident. Suddenly, you hear a loud bellow from a wooded area to the side of the road, followed by the pounding of many feet. You look up to see a small group of squat, bald humanoids with enormous fangs. Brandishing heavy wooden clubs, they charge toward you!

Suddenly, there is a blinding flash of light, and your vision is filled with a swarm of sparkling, golden motes!

The motes are the result of Virgil's *glitterdust* spell, cast in time with the bellowing rush of the norkers. All of the PCs (including Elarius) must roll for surprise, and those in the area of effect of the *glitterdust* must make a saving throw vs. spell at a –1 penalty or be blinded (suffering a –4 penalty to attack rolls, saving throws, and armor class) for 2–5 rounds. The *glitterdust* spell is focused on the greatest number of PCs that Virgil can target while still having Elarius (who is still riding in the wagon) in the area of effect. Note that all characters in the area of effect of the spell are covered in sparkling golden motes, regardless of whether they save vs. spell; this exposes any invisible PCs, as well. It is highly likely that the draft horse is in the area of effect; if it is, the DM should make a morale check to determine whether the horse screams and rears up, possibly causing further chaos and confusion.

By the end of the first round, the norkers reach the wagon, but they do not attack the PCs or Elarius; instead, they busy themselves grabbing, hurling, and smashing as much of the wagon's contents as possible.

For purposes of determining how much damage the norkers cause in a typical round, the DM should assume that the wagon is loaded with 5,000 gp worth of glassware, reagents, spell components, and similar goods. Each norker causes from 200–500 gp worth of damage per round.

During the ensuing altercation, some PCs might opt to engage in melee with the destructive norkers. In this case, the norkers so engaged are incapable of ignoring Virgil's orders to destroy the contents of the wagon—but they are fairly intelligent creatures, so they attempt to defend themselves while obeying Virgil by using the wagon's contents to attack the PCs. In this case, the DM should roll 1d6 and consult **Sidebar 1** for each attacking norker, to determine its action for the round.

The DM is encouraged to be creative in his description of what the norkers are hurling at the PCs. Don't just say that a character was hit by a glass jar; describe a jar filled with sapphire blue liquid, dried frogs, or horse teeth!

The DM should note that norkers who are dividing their attention between breaking equipment and fighting off PCs do not destroy as much; these norkers ruin only 200 gp worth of supplies each round. It is also important for the DM to point out to the PCs that slain norkers vanish immediately after slumping to the ground; this is a clue that they are summoned creatures.

If at any time the norkers manage to destroy over half of the equipment in the wagon (over 2,500 gp worth of supplies), the DM should mention that a foul-smelling cloud of green-tinted vapor has begun steaming up from the mixing reagents that lie strewn about the area. This cloud rapidly billows out, and in the following round it becomes a phenomenon that resembles a weak *stinking cloud* spell, allowing a +4 to all saving throw attempts. The summoned norkers have no choice but to remain in the cloud and attempt to smash up the contents of the wagon if they save, but those that fail their saves are forced to run out of the cloud. Virgil is not be pleased by this retreat, but he and Jack can still use *unseen servant* spells to destroy the wagon's load from outside the cloud.

While the norkers destroy equipment and the PCs perform their own actions, both Elarius and Virgil are busy casting spells. Provided that he was not either surprised or blinded, Elarius reacts to the appearance of the norkers by first casting his *levitate* spell to move out of harm's way.

The next round, while Virgil casts *silence 15' radius* at Elarius, Elarius attempts to cast *mirror image* on himself (he is a cautious man). At this time, Jack flies over and perches in a nearby tree. He has activated his *change self* ability in the previous round, so he appears as a starling. He uses his *unseen servant* ability to break more of the wagon's cargo (between 10–100 gp worth of equipment per round). The PCs might find it eerie to be dealing with some sort of "ghost" that opens crates and flings beakers about, especially when their weapons have no effect upon it. (The force summoned by an *unseen servant* spell can be damaged only by area-effect spells, such as *burning hands* spells.)

In the third round, Elarius casts *lightning bolt* if he can still catch some norkers within its area of effect without shooting too close to the wagon; otherwise, he resorts to his *magic missile* spells. Virgil casts *unseen servant* and begins helping the norkers as Jack does.

It should be noted that Virgil's *choke* spell was memorized for use in the unlikely event that he was attacked while traveling on the road; he casts it on a PC only if he feels extremely threatened (i.e., if his life is in danger). Conversely, PCs should not earn the full amount of experience points for killing Virgil, as he is not really evil enough to

warrant such an end. The DM should grant only half of Virgil's XP value to PCs who kill him or drive him off, reserving the full value for those who capture him and bring him to justice.

From his hiding place in the bushes, Virgil is almost undetectable, but PCs who spend one round looking for whoever is casting spells have a chance of spotting him. The percentage chance to detect Virgil is equal to the total of the searching PC's Intelligence and Wisdom scores, plus 1% for every level of experience he has attained. In addition to this chance, Virgil has a 10% chance per round of involuntarily giving away his location by slipping, making a sudden movement while casting, or moving to get a better view of the situation. If detected, Virgil panics and immediately casts *wall of fog* in an effort to obscure his presence. In the following round, he activates his loudly buzzing *ebony fly*, which he attempts to mount and escape upon. If he is not discovered, Virgil continues breaking equipment with his *unseen servant* spell until the sixth round of mayhem, at which point all of the summoned norkers vanish abruptly. At this point, Virgil attempts to slip quietly away and recover his summoned *mount* before riding off, rejoining the road ahead well out of sight of the PCs before making his way back to Redport.

Even if Virgil manages to escape, he leaves behind several clues that might incriminate him. First of all, Elarius knows that his cousin is a conjurer, and it is clear enough that the norkers who attacked the wagon were summoned monsters. Additionally, Elarius knows that Virgil has a blue jay for a familiar; while Jack appears as a starling for the ambush, Elarius might suspect that something is strange about the fact that the person who attacked his wagon was accompanied by a small bird. Note that it is possible that no one noticed Jack during the course of the encounter; he has tried to remain as inconspicuous as possible. If Virgil was forced to flee on his *ebony fly*, he almost surely gives Elarius cause to think of him as the culprit, because Elarius knows that Virgil possesses an *ebony fly*.

Sidebar 2: Level of Success

90%–100% of Equipment Salvaged: Almost Perfect

The PCs must be very fast thinkers indeed if they managed to protect this much equipment from the rampaging norkers! Elarius is overjoyed with their performance and gives each PC a bonus of 25 gp on arrival in Redport. He also tells the Masters of the College of the Crimson Eye of the identities of some truly resourceful adventurers. It is almost certain that the College will contact the PCs at a later date (when they require the services of talented guards, investigators, and so forth). In addition to any other benefits, the party should be awarded a bonus of 1,500 XP for their exceptional performance.

75%–90% of Equipment Salvaged: Good

The PCs fought a hard fight, and they managed to save enough equipment to keep Elarius out of any real trouble with his superiors. Elarius respects them and hires them out as guards again if they are interested. He is certainly willing to vouch for any PC mages who wish to join the College of the Crimson Eye. The PCs should be awarded a total of 1,000 XP for their efforts.

50%–75% of Equipment Salvaged: Fair

The PCs probably could have done better, but they could have done much worse. Elarius pays them as agreed and might be willing to take them on as guards in the future if he can't find anyone better. He encourages PC mages interested in joining to College of the Crimson Eye to go out into the world and seek more experience before applying for membership. Perhaps at a later date they can impress him enough to gain his confidence. (In the meantime, Elarius himself is watched closely by some rather annoyed Masters of the College; at this point, his recommendation wouldn't mean much, anyway.) The party should receive 500 XP, even though they did not completely succeed in their mission to keep the equipment safe and intact.

Under 50% of Equipment Salvaged: Well ...

While Elarius is not a rude man, it is evident from his weak, almost patronizing praise that he is disappointed in the PCs. He does not bring up the issue of membership in the College of the Crimson Eye with PC mages. If they push the issue, he simply shrugs and mutters crossly that he does not think his praise will amount to a hill of beans when the Masters see how much of the college's money he has just lost. In fact, Elarius probably loses his position in the college, as one of the Masters was depending on a specific reagent to be delivered to the college on time in order to complete the creation of a vial of magical ink for a scroll (because the reagent did not arrive, all of the Master's effort was wasted). If Elarius loses his position, Virgil may well be his replacement (depending on whether the PCs determine his guilt). In this scenario, the party receives no bonus XP.

If any PCs go into the woods to look for clues regarding the identity of the strange spellcaster, they might discover fragments of a cinnamon stick, on which Virgil, who shares his cousin's taste for the spice, was nervously gnawing while waiting for the wagon to arrive. Furthermore, a ranger or other PC with the ability to track might notice an oddity about the tracks left behind in the woods; they are pigeon-toed, and Elarius is aware of his cousin's slightly deformed feet.

If Elarius left his summoned *mount* behind in his effort to escape from the PCs, they might find it tied to a tree; the *mount* vanishes suddenly in a few hours, further evidence that a conjurer was to blame for the norker attack.

Cleaning Up

By the end of the ambush, the PCs find themselves in one of several situations. This depends largely on two things; first, how much of the equipment was

destroyed by the norkers, and second, whether or not Virgil was discovered and captured by the PCs.

Regarding the equipment, the damage caused by the norkers is not as extensive as it may look at first. Luckily for Elarius, he took the time to learn the *mending* spell when he was first appointed to the position of Procurer; he figured that it would make his job easier in the long run if he could simply repair equipment, rather than having to replace it all of the time. Because of this, Elarius is eventually able to repair a good portion of the smashed glassware and some of the spell components. This accounts for roughly 20–50% of the damages incurred by the norkers. (Because of the large amount of glass fragments present, it would be more difficult to sift through and separate them all than the effort would be worth, so Elarius sticks to repairing items that have broken into a handful or less of easily recognizable parts.) The rest of the damages consist mostly of unrecognizable glass slivers, spilt reagents, and spell components that were ruined due to being crushed, soaked in chemicals, etc. The DM should use **Sidebar 2** to determine the relative success of the party in defending the wagon, remembering to use the percentage of equipment rendered useable after Elarius magically mends the fragments.

Regarding Virgil, the PCs probably find themselves in one of two situations. They might have discovered and captured Virgil during the course of his raid on the wagon, in which case Elarius does not desire to harm his cousin but insists on taking him back to the College of the Crimson Eye to confess his crimes. In this case, the DM may choose to ignore any unfavorable results from the chart above; regardless of how much equipment was destroyed, as the Masters of the College have someone besides Elarius with whom to be upset (and from whom they can demand their lost money). Alternatively, Virgil might have escaped detection, or he might have been noticed but fled before the PCs could apprehend him. In this situation, much depends on whether or not Elarius and the PCs can put together enough evidence that incriminates Virgil as the instigator of the norker ambush.

The DM has the ultimate say in what the College of the Crimson Eye accepts as proof of Virgil's involvement, and this might involve a trial of some sort, for which the PCs will be asked or ordered to remain in Redport to serve as witnesses. The results of any trial should hinge greatly on the efforts of the PCs in making connections or uncovering evidence at the scene of the attack; if the only evidence presented are the suspicions of Elarius, then Virgil is probably off the hook. On the other hand, if the PCs are instrumental in exposing Virgil, they have earned a bitter enemy.

It is ultimately up to the DM to determine the fate of Virgil, after considering how well he fares in his plot to discredit Elarius. If he succeeds without suffering any serious injuries to his body or pride, he probably does not harbor much animosity toward the PCs, although he may have a low opinion of their skill as adventurers. In this case, Virgil probably continues in his self-centered, uncaring ways as he strives for excellence and power within the College of the Crimson Eye. Because of his arrogant, overly-competitive nature, he might well prove a thorn in the side of PCs who ultimately join the college, but he should not become diabolically evil unless affected by some other force or event. If he is exposed by the PCs for the treacherous villain that he is, then he certainly hates them, although the extent of his hatred probably depends on the college's method of punishing him. If he is merely fined and demoted, he remains in the college and limits his wrath to doing what he can to make life miserable and advancement difficult for PCs who join it. However, if he is actually thrown out of the college (a distinct possibility), he could well turn a darker shade of evil and show up later as a favored henchman of a powerful NPC villain!

Of course, since Virgil is not as corrupt as many antagonists, it is possible that he may have a change of heart and attempt to prove his sincere regret to Elarius and the PCs in the future. Perhaps he is encouraged to make friends with them because he needs their help. (A friend in need is a friend, indeed ...)

One more thing that the DM must consider both before and after running this encounter is the importance of the College of the Crimson Eye in the future adventures of the PCs. The exact nature of the college is left purposefully unclear to permit the DM to develop it as he sees fit, but some things to think about (especially if any PC wizards wish to join) are membership fees, benefits of being a member, the presence or absence of a member's library and/or alchemical laboratory, the presence or absence of living quarters available to members (for a fee), etc. Of course, the ultimate goals of the college should be sketched out, as well. There is nothing wrong with having the College of the Crimson Eye be nothing more or less than an organization dedicated to the spread of magical knowledge, but it might be interesting for the DM to throw in a few long-term goals that go beyond this. These might include defeating a particular menace to magic or the local kingdom, or learning about a specific facet of magical knowledge (perhaps divination magic, travel between the planes, or the secret of immortality). Perhaps the college's "respected" reputation is undeserved, and the Masters manipulate the junior members to serve as unwitting pawns in a secret, evil plot (the summoning of evil outer-planar beings of vast power, or the overthrowing and replacement of the current government with a magocracy, etc.). Perhaps the college is secretly allied with the local thieves' guild. The possibilities are as boundless as the DM's imagination! In any event, the college might have one or several uses for the PCs, regardless of whether or not any of them choose to become members.

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THE ECOLOGY OF THE STEEL DRAGON

Soulbond

To my Queen, Mythistil Lyryné of the Moon Court of Elea,

Moon bless thee. I know this missive will come as a shock; it has been fully four hundred summers since last I commended myself to the Moon Court. When I had left, I swore upon the Oathstone that I would live to see the drow city of Riaz'kilil fall.

My Queen, I have done this, and I am returning home.

GLADLY WILL I RELATE THE TALE OF THAT FELL CITY'S destruction—but not within this message. I beg you, my Queen, have patience with your servant, for the story I must tell is nothing short of astonishing. It has opened the eyes of one who thought she had witnessed all the world held secret.

My tale begins and ends with a dragon called Sembyrn.

I was carefully concealed within the ranks of House Ch'rar's armed forces for some years and at one time was assigned to a cavern patrol group. House Ch'rar had been feuding with House Kalu for quite some time, and the feud was escalating, this time worse than ever.

My unit was assigned to meet with a defector from House Kalu, a wizard who saw his House's doom approaching and wished to trade information for his life.

We were escorting the wizard through what we thought was a secure passage, when we were ambushed by Kalu warriors. I assumed they had "persuaded" our vanguard to forego warning us.

The battle was joined, but we were badly outnumbered. We sent many Kalu to Lolth, but ultimately the wizard and I were left to face some twenty seasoned drow warriors. I could not reveal my true identity, for what more mercy could a lone gray elf expect from these drow than could a warrior of a rival House? I braced myself for a fight to the end.

The end was written differently than I had pictured, however. The wizard stepped forward boldly. Without fear he told these Kalu to flee or meet the Spider Queen sooner than they hoped. The commander who led the Kalu soldiers laughed and ordered our deaths.

I will never forget what happened next. The wizard's form melted and warped, and his neck snaked out into a huge reptilian head that grabbed a hapless Kalu soldier in a toothed maw, as the rest of the mage turned from drow to dragon.

That fight ended even more quickly than the first. Within minutes, all the Kalu had died or fled in abject terror.

Then, the dragon turned toward me and bade, "It is not a veil I wear but my true face, elf. I would see your real eyes, as well, for you do not wear them now."

I almost protested, but the dragon was neither fooled by my disguise nor patient. I peeled off the thin, black mask

by
Jay Knioum

illustrated by
Stephen Schwartz

to reveal my own face. As the dragon regarded my true visage, he spoke again.

"We are the same, you and I," he said. "Both of us have worn many faces, and we will wear many more before Io takes our bones. Yet can either of us say truly which of the faces is real?"

It turned out that Sembyrn, as the dragon introduced himself, had watched me ever since I arrived in the drow city. He knew my mission, my origins, and my profession.

Even so, Sembyrn was quiet about his own motivations for living among the drow for some ninety years. Sembyrn told me how he had come to the city as a renegade of another city of dark elves. He was almost cast out at first but had shown so much aptitude for magic and such knowledge of the Underdark that the Kalu adopted him and trained him as a sorcerer. Sembyrn took the opportunity to learn the ways of the Drow, and their magic. Even though his store of arcane knowledge was already vast, he could always learn more.

Ever since, Sembryn had worked his way up the power structure of the Kalu, even assassinating his obstacles when necessary. He had been here for nine decades, impressing even the most powerful matriarchs of the city with his ambition and knowledge of magic.

However, Sembyrn told me, it was now time to move on. I pressed for an explanation, and his answer astounded me.

"My next life awaits me," he said. "The black mask of a drow wizard will soon be peeled from me, and I shall then bury away these experiences so that my next life is not hampered by visions of the Underdark."

I was fascinated and more than a little confused. He explained to me about his kind, the steel dragons, who spend their lives in the forms of humans, demihumans, and humanoids. Sembyrn, over the course of the next few months (we had long since established the "mage" into House Ch'rar society), regaled me with tales of his past lives, although he never spoke of them as his own memories but talked of the people he had been as if they were his friends, not his disguises.

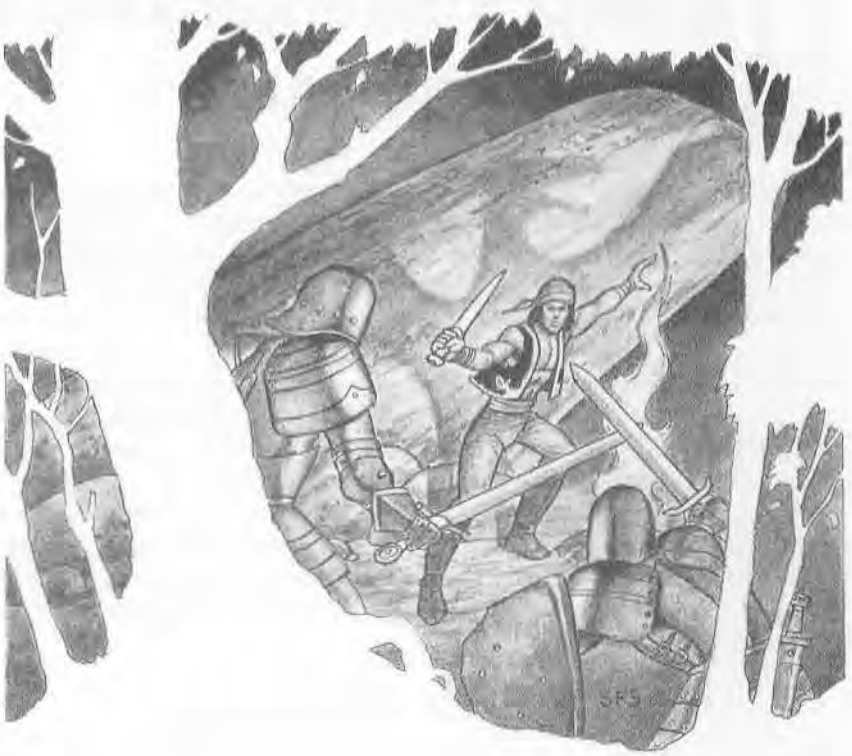
The Chain of Lives,[1] Sembyrn called it. "We steels live as many, but many different," he said. "Over the course of our long lives, we walk the earth as men, women, kings, paupers, humans, elves, orcs, and all those in between. I have liberated nations, and I have driven slaves across deserts. I was five times a sailor and seven a soldier. I remember every life and regret not one of them." At this last, his deep drow's voice was barely a whisper, and I doubted the truth of this absence of regret.[2]

I was astounded but at the same time sympathetic. As he told his tales, Sembyrn revealed a sadness, however well-buried, that the true Sembyrn was never to be found along this Chain of Lives. How many times had I, an infiltrator who has spent her life wearing other faces, had this same lament?

Over time, the drow city began to fall apart, and I had not forgotten my mission amid the sea of Sembyrn's tales. I fell into the intrigues of the city with abandon and am proud to say that much of my maneuvering saw fruition. In the end, the city was finally overrun by two entire clans of mountain dwarves, eager to rid their ancestral lands of these spider children—and aided by maps I had procured for them. Sembyrn and I were free, he to his next life and I to mine.

As we neared the surface for the first time in over ninety years, the "dark elf" asked me suddenly whether I would join him in his next life.

I had considered this carefully, my Queen. Even though my loyalty to the Moon Court has never diminished, Sembyrn's presence had grown to fit me like



1. Steel dragons live a long time. However, they opt to spend these many years among humans, demihumans, or humanoids who live for far less time. Since steel dragons wish to blend into the populace as easily as possible without fear of discovery, they have adapted to this need, creating what they call the Chain of Lives.

The Chain is basically the dragon's collection of human lives. Steels know well that they cannot exist under the same disguise forever; someone will notice if the town's mayor, elected for a lifetime, has been in office for 300 years! Thus, steel dragons have disciplined themselves to live many different lives, never keeping the same guise forever.

2. Steel dragons are neutral, giving them a cosmopolitan attitude toward what lives they choose to lead. These dragons care nothing for good or evil. They may live as a noble hero one life, a tyrant the next. They seek to experience the totality of human existence, and that means sampling as many walks of life as they can before they grow too old.

a shawl, and I could not bear to part with him. The dragon and I had become the closest of friends, and I felt compelled to follow him to the next life, to be free for the first time in a long time, and perhaps finally to find myself.

After we left the Underdark, the sun was alien to us both, and we spent much time soaking it up like parched earth does rain. Even so, Sembyrn told me that he must seek seclusion for a time, to Vault. I had heard him use this term before, and I asked him what it meant.

"We steels live many lives, but we live one at a time and cannot carry the others around like dead scales," he explained. "Thus, we perform a meditation of sorts after each life, and we call this the Vaulting, when our memories are stored away but not obliterated. In the next life, we will not be bothered by the memory of the one previous.[3] It's better that way." Again, the tinge of sadness. Sembyrn, I could tell, had lost much in his lives.

Sembyrn asked me to travel to a far land where clans of gypsies were said to roam this time of year. I was curious as to how the dragon, who had lived miles beneath the earth for the last century knew of the wanderings of the gypsies.

The dragon then pointed a claw to several small scales along his neck, each with a strange mark etched into it. "Each mark represents a friend," Sembyrn said. "As we live a life, the rest of the world changes without our knowledge. My friends are my links to the age, my informants as to the progression of history. Through them, I gain insights unconsciously as to the state of affairs in the rest of the world, wherever my links may roam."

Sembyrn further explained that he does not fully possess this wisdom until he Vaults, but nevertheless it comes to him in dreams, and always lingers in the back of his mind.[4] *Deja vu* is that feeling when you are sure you've been somewhere or done something before. Such a feeling, Sembyrn said once, is second nature to a steel dragon.

Before two years had passed, Sembyrn found me again. I now wore the guise of a human, a gypsy girl called Natasha. I had a difficult time integrating myself into the society of the gypsy family I had chosen. They are very untrusting of any except their own kin. However, these free folk were not unlike the fairies who dance the periphery of Your Majesty's own court in many ways, and their mannerisms became clear enough to me to mimic. Over time, I gained their trust, however guarded.

As we live a life, the rest of the world changes without our knowledge. My friends are my links to the age, my informants as to the progress of history.

Sembyrn, now a powerfully built human named Josef, had found me in the winter of my second year with the gypsy family. I was surprised at how much knowledge of the folk he already possessed, but he listened to my lessons in their behavior with an attention I could not ascribe to many treants.

I introduced "Josef" to the clan as my own brother, who had been taken as a small boy by a band of raiders. The reception was not as cordial as I had hoped but exactly as I had expected.

Then, Josef began to speak to the gypsies in their own tongue.[5] To my astonishment, the gypsies were enraptured by this stranger, this *gaje*, in their midst. Josef began to tell them stories of the world, of wonders he had seen, and of hardships he had endured. None of the tales, I knew, were fabrications.

Josef, to my astonishment, soon laughed and danced with these gypsies as if he were one of them. They accepted me more readily after that. So began our time of endless migration, as we traveled with the gypsy band from town to town, and kingdom to kingdom.

Do you recall, my Queen, how a dragon can scare the wits from entire armies just by flying over them? This presence is no mere back-arching but a kind of magical power of presence. Sembyrn had, he explained to me, used this same power on the gypsies. It seems that his kind, who live among other races their entire lives, had learned to adapt this presence to suit their guises. Sembyrn told me of steels who swayed the oppressed to rebellion, and kings to ruin, using this force of personality.[6]

We stayed with the gypsies for many years, and I noticed that Josef, even though he was a practically immortal dragon in reality, still aged with a naturalness I had to struggle to mimic with my disguises. So skilled were these dragons in adopting humans' forms, that

3. The Vaulting is the steel dragon's ability to "seal off" the memories of its past lives, thus safeguarding both the dragon's objectivity and sanity. This seal is not absolute; the memories can be accessed by the dragon. The dragon is always aware of the memories' existence, but they seem closer to hazy memories of the lives of other people than the dragon's actual experience. The memories do not interfere with the dragon's current life; indeed, he may go through a life without ever thinking on his other incarnations at all. This allows each new life to be a learning experience, unclouded by old prejudices and lessons. The Vaulting, however, does not obliterate the dragon's self-awareness, nor does it close off magical knowledge or wisdom. The dragon is still a dragon in thought and soul.

4. Steel dragons, over time, gather a host of individuals that they call "agelinks." Using a special spell known only to their kind, steel dragons can "dreamlink" to a few chosen individuals; each one is represented by a special marking on one of the dragon's scales. The dreamlink fills the dreams of the dragon with visions from the lives of the individuals to whom the dragon has linked. These visions are stored in the dragon's subconscious, and are revealed in full only when the dragon next Vaults. Using the dreamlinks, a dragon is able to gather knowledge of the changing world, while living in a life that would ordinarily not be exposed to such information. For example, a steel living as an alchemist would be able to dreamlink with a foreign general and thus learn much of wars fought hundreds of leagues away. Through this, the dragons may keep up with events in the world, making them better able to choose their next life.

5. Steel dragons make good use of their draconic ability to communicate with any intelligent creature. They have honed this ability to an art form and can easily mimic the speech patterns of even the thickest accent. These dragons love to learn languages, despite their communication ability, and frequently research the languages and customs of the culture in which they plan to immerse themselves.

they could slowly age themselves with nary a thought, as time marched on.[7]

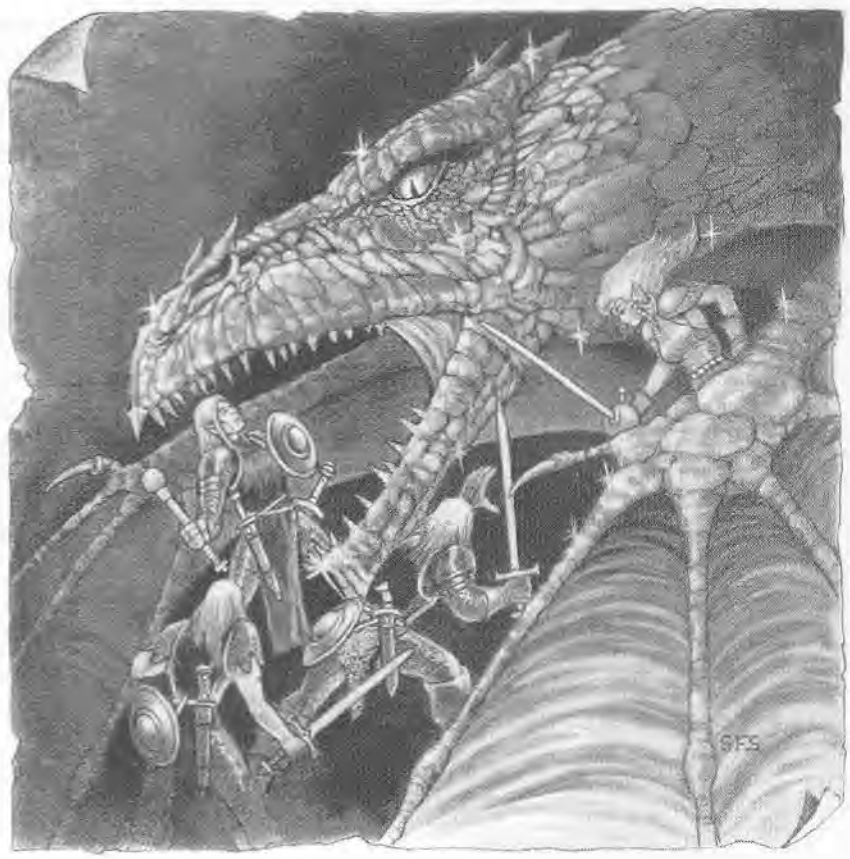
Our lives were filled with happiness, but also with fear as we lived with these nomadic folk. I learned many lessons during this time, as I witnessed these people—*my* people—suffering the worst kind of prejudice and oppression, even as they stayed free and strong-willed. I never knew the humans like this, and I swore never to look at all humans the same way again.

It must have been some thirty years after Josef had arrived in camp that our clan was attacked by the knights. The monarch of the land we were traveling through had found cause in his black heart to hate our kind. I will never know why. The king's soldiers hit our camp at night, and the slaughter was horrific. People I had called sister, grandfather and dear friend were cut down with a speed that seemed surreal.

Josef and I acted without hesitation to defend our chosen family from the raiders. I took down seven or so of them before an arrow bit into my back. I could feel the poison seep into my blood, and my muscles failed me. I lay helpless and paralyzed in the snow as the gypsies died around me.

Then, I saw Josef— or was it him? The gypsy man I barely even knew as a dragon after so long suddenly tore into the knights with only a knife. He did not change form, presumably to hide his identity from his family. I wondered through the venemous haze how he hoped to defeat these skilled soldiers in only his human form.

I quickly had my answer, as Josef grabbed a knight from his horse and threw him into a tree fully twenty feet away. He exploded in a blur of motion as he hacked down the knights with his knife, driving it again and again through the knights' plate armor as if it were parchment. More than once, a soldier had brought a sword hard upon the unarmored Josef but left only a scratch, if any mark at all. Indeed, the gypsy—the dragon—fought like a demon with skin of iron that night.



After the battle was over, I was picked up and laid in a warm bed in a wagon. I later learned that the soldiers had killed fully two-thirds of our family, and most of the others were crippled for life. Even so, I wondered how we would have fared if Josef had not been there. I opened my eyes and saw him sitting on a stool near my bed, looking everything like a gypsy man in his sixties and nothing like an ancient dragon.

He must have recognized my curious look, as he said in his timeworn accent, "My kind can, if we choose, empower our human guises with the strength of our true forms. We can fight with a dragon's strength and fortitude and shrug off blows as if our scales still hugged us. Yet we need not reveal ourselves." Josef said that he knew a night like this would come and had long ago prepared himself.[8]

6. Steel dragons have modified their natural *fear* aura to serve them in their human guises. These modifications can be divided into three powers: manifestation, obscurement, and emotion control.

When a steel dragon uses manifestation in his human form, he calls upon his aura to grant him a great presence. This makes the disguised dragon seem like someone to be heeded and admired (or feared) by any who encounter him. These dragons can be found anywhere from political battles, to universities, to taverns. In game terms, a steel dragon using this ability in human form may *charm* any nonhostile creature with the normal penalties for the dragon's age. Hostile creatures may also be charmed, but without penalty. If need be, he can also invoke his normal fear aura in human form, with the normal effects.

Obscurement is an inversion of the *fear* aura, making the humaniform dragon more likely to escape notice. Steels use this ability when masquerading as criminals or kingmakers. The game effect is the same as the priest spell *sanctuary*, but can be activated at will (whereas the spell is effective only if the caster is attacked). The saving throw necessary to notice an obscured dragon is automatically failed by creatures with 1 HD or less, and higher levels save with appropriate penalties.

Emotion control is used by these dragons to incite great passions in those he is among. With the same area of effect as his *fear* aura, the steel can use an *emotion* spell at any time. Only one emotion can be manipulated at a time, and the level it is cast is the dragon's casting level. Thus, a steel can stand, in human guise, before a crowd of people, and by the force of his words and presence can incite them to riot, or prevent one. In any case, those below 1 HD are automatically affected by this power.

7. Steel dragons have a skill unique to their kind, which they refer to as Timetouching. Since they typically remain in a human or demihuman disguise for a long period of time, steel dragons have honed their shapechanging skills to alter their form slightly with time, thus simulating the aging process. Steels do not have to think about this; it happens on an unconscious level, even during sleep. Thus, if a steel dragon lives as a human for 15 years, her human form will look 15 years older at the end of this "lifespan" than it did in the beginning.

We stayed with the family for another thirty years before Sembyrn decided it was time to move again. He came to the decision abruptly, and I was greatly saddened at the prospect of leaving these people we had grown "old" with. Sembyrn was adamant, however, and I knew he could not deny his nature, and I could not part from him. I had long since come to love that dragon as a true friend, as a mentor, and perhaps even as a father in many ways.

Even so, the dragon and I had long ago shared many very personal feelings with each other. I found the courage once to ask him something I had wanted to know since the first years I had known him. In his lives, had he ever taken a lover? Had he married?

Sembyrn's eyes had grown wistful, and he told me of his various mates throughout his life. He had been married countless times and had taken many consorts. And, he said resolutely, he had loved every single one genuinely.

I now understood fully the reason for the Vaulting. How could a steel dragon go on having lost so many loves and children? Yes, Sembyrn had told me, he had fathered many sons and daughters of many races over time. None of them would ever know their true heritage, he explained. Sembyrn could suppress his essence so that not only would magic or powers of the mind fail to reveal his dragonhood, but any children he sires during a life will be normal for a member of that race, with nary a scale to confess their heritage.[9]

My Queen, I could fill a hundred scrolls with my tales of the lives I shared with Sembyrn after that time. Over the next several centuries, we had been humans of many kinds, and even lived in an orcish tribe. That last is a tale best told in person, but trust that you will never see our enemies the same again.

I had become Sembyrn's Soulbond, he told me. Every steel dragon takes one, you see, a special individual to carry on with the dragon throughout the Chain of Lives, the only one who ever knows the dragon's true nature.[10]

From that point, I attended each of Sembryn's weddings and was present when his children were named. I fought wars beside him and even helped him sweep the floor of an inn we owned for several years. We did not merely travel; we lived lives, and many of them. I saw things that make me feel small compared to the world, and even caused me to doubt my sanity, but I had never known such joy before.

The last life that we led together, we led as adventurers. We traveled with many fascinating people who walked just beyond the bounds of normality wherever they went.

When the party we were with embarked on a quest to slay an evil dragon, however, Sembyrn and I decided to move on. Sembyrn could not bring himself to do harm to a member of his race, be it good, evil, or in between.[11]

There would not be a next life, Sembyrn said with his characteristic abruptness one rainy day in some city or another whose name I have forgotten.

I felt stunned by his proclamation, but in the end I found it not so surprising. Both Sembyrn and I were over four hundred years older than we had been when we met, and at that time Sembyrn was among the oldest of his kind. He was

I saw things that made me feel small compared to the world, and even caused me to doubt my sanity, but I had never known such joy before.

8. Since they spend most of their lives in a form other than draconic, Steel dragons have learned to transfer many of their inherent physical abilities to their humanoid forms. This is called guise empowerment.

Guise empowerment can be done only to the dragon's adopted guise form, not to just any form into which the dragon chooses to change. For example, if a steel is living as an elf, only that elven form may be so empowered. If the steel dragon shapechanges into an orc for some reason, the empowerment is lost until the elven form is once again assumed.

Guise empowerment is very difficult and takes about a month to achieve, during which time the dragon has only the physical capabilities of his new form. When completed, the empowerment makes the new form almost as powerful as the dragons natural body. The following abilities are granted to a steel dragon who has empowered his adopted form:

Combat Modifier: The dragon may now make use of his combat modifier for age. This applies to any barehanded or melee attack the dragon makes. It also augments the spellcasting level of the dragon's adopted form.

Dragon Senses: Empowered guises regain the excellent senses the dragon enjoys in his true form, as well as the ability to see invisible creatures or objects. In addition, he gains the dragon form's *clairaudience* in lair ability.

Dragon Hide: Steels may toughen the skin of their guise-form, allowing for a better natural AC. While not as effective as the dragon's own scales, the toughened skin does function just as well as most armors. Thus, empowered guises have a natural armor class of six steps worse than the dragon's true form, for a minimum of 8. This ability cannot be combined with armor worn, but it can be combined with magical items that lower armor class (i.e., *cloak of protection*).

9. To experience the lives of humans and demihumans more fully, steel dragons frequently marry or take mates of their adopted race, even siring or having children by them. Steel dragons have the ability unconsciously to suppress their draconic essence, such that any children sired by the dragon will be of the dragon's adopted race. If a steel is living as an elf, he will father elven children, not half-dragons. This adaptation serves to hide the dragon's passage as such, by not leaving a trail of super-children in his wake.

10. Eventually, a steel dragon will choose a Soulbond. This individual is the most trusted friend and companion a steel dragon will ever have outside of his own species. A Soulbond is different from other Links, spouses, or children, in that this link is maintained throughout the dragon's Chain of Lives. No matter how much a Steel cares for a normal link, the feeling is lost after the Vaulting. Soulbonds, however, remain with the dragon from life to life. Soulbonds are aware of the dragon's true form and nature, as well as the creature's odd mission in life.

Soulbonds gain many benefits from this special link. They are telepathically linked to their steel dragon companions and may communicate over any distance save for extraplanar. Secondly, the Soulbond may change form to a limited degree but must always remain within her own species. A human Soulbond may alter her form however she wishes, as long as she remains human. She cannot transform into an elf, for instance.

Steel dragons prefer to Soulbond with long-lived races, such as elves and dwarves, but do not bond with these exclusively.

The role of the Soulbond is one of servant, friend, and companion. They help the dragon to live in and adapt to different societies. In return, the dragon sees to the care of his Soulbond and defends his companion with his life.

Even so, a Soulbond is not chosen unless he can devote the required amount of time to the dragon. Steel dragons never choose as Soulbonds those with overwhelming responsibilities, such as rulers or priests.

11. Steel dragons are neutral creatures, even though they explore many different alignments through the course of their many lives. However, no matter what their current mindset may be, most Steels cannot bring themselves to harm another dragon of any color or alignment unless they are in dragon form themselves.

weary of the traveling and the Chain. I was saddened beyond measure that the journey was over, but I could not deny my friend his well-deserved rest.

Then, he took me somewhere I had never been, where I saw something I had never seen.

In his dragon form, with me on his back, Sembyrn took us to a lonely, mist-shrouded mountain lake and landed upon a craggy cliff overlooking the water. We waited. As night fell, we began to see large, winged shapes descend upon the lake and perch on similar crags around it, one at a time. I realized that they were other steel dragons, all gathering from their various lives around the world.

I then asked Sembyrn a question that he had avoided answering for all these years: What had he done in the period between lives, when I was scouting our next home? I knew he had Vaulted, but I usually went two or three years without seeing him, and on two occasions went an entire decade without his company.

Sembyrn, as we watched the dragons descend upon the ghostly lake, told me of his children: his true children.

Between lives, it turns out, steel dragons come to hidden places known only to their kind to see one another, tell tales of the world, and to mate. Sembyrn spoke with fond remembrance and fierce emotion of his two mates and the hatchlings they had sired. I learned that Sembyrn had lived two brief, decade-long "lives" with his mates, solely for the purpose of seeing his children born and instructing them in the ways of the steel dragon. In these Times of Rising, as he called them, he and his mate wore alternating guise as human, demihuman, and dragon forms as they taught their hatchlings to live both as dragons and as men and women. Then, at the end of the Rising Time, the hatchlings would go forth and undergo their first Vaulting, in which they lock away the memory of their parents and assume their first human guises.[12]

I was spellbound, as I had never known about any of this.

When all the dragons had gathered, they began a rite as old as the stars, as they each in turn sang their deeds to the others. When Sembyrn's turn came, he told his tale in a voice so beautiful that a blind listener could scarce believe it came from a huge creature such as he. When he finished, he told his people in their own tongue, which Sembyrn had taught me to understand, that he was entering Reflection. The other dragons, with a touching intimacy-in-formality, commended him and bade him farewell.

We then left. I was surprised at how simple yet touching the ritual was. Still, I asked my old friend where we were bound next.

"Betwixt each and every lifetime," Sembyrn had said, "We steels must retreat to privacy and record our wisdom, before Vaulting, so that the lessons learned and the lives led may live on after we go to Io." Sembyrn called this ritual the composition, and it is a tradition older than the elves.[13]

12. Steel dragons devote a few years between lives to the task of mating and producing hatchlings. Steel dragons have one or two secluded and secret meeting spots where they meet to exchange tales and to find mates. No other creature, except perhaps Soulbonds, are allowed to ever see this place.

Once a mate is found, the dragons adopt their next guises. Instead of living among humans or demihumans, however, they choose to live in relative isolation. The female lays her eggs in dragon form, in a well-hidden spot, and then the eggs are cared for in their human home. Once they hatch, the family adopts a strange lifestyle that alternates between dragonhood and humanity, as they instruct their hatchlings on this duality of life.

From the outset, they try to instill in the hatchlings a respect and curiosity for (demi)humanity. As the hatchlings grow older, the family moves frequently, always in human form, to expose the young to different sorts of people.

As time goes on, the mates have less and less to do with the younger dragons. They still advise, but do not interfere as the young dragons gain experience. Eventually, the parents teach the dragon the ways of Vaulting, the final lesson the dragons learn from them. On the first Vaulting, a young dragon stores away most of its memories of its parents but still remembers the lessons, insuring that the dragon may make his way in the world without ever returning home. After the first Vaulting, a steel dragon never again sees his parents.

13. After a Steel dragon leaves a life, but before Vaulting and moving on, the dragon performs a ritual called Composition. This involves the dragon producing some sort of work, be it books, scrolls, music, sculpture, or other form of art or record. The Composition comprises all the wisdom it gained during that lifetime; all observations, opinions, emotions, and other such information it gleaned from her years as that person.

By the time a steel dragon enters Reflection (see 15, below), the dragon's composition is usually huge, made up of many lives' worth of experience and lessons. Legends among these dragons hold that the dragon god Io specifically created the steels for this purpose, so that the other races may learn from these dragons' observations of them.

I did not fully appreciate this composition until we reached Sembyrn's lair. I had never seen this place, and it was little more than a cave that delved deep into a huge mountain.

However, once we reached the deepest parts of the cave, Sembyrn's sanctum, I was completely dumbstruck.

Lining the cave were all sorts of treasures, although none of them were monetary. Books, scrolls, music, sculpture, paintings, and other items with obvious magical enchantment.

"This is my composition, Danaenn, and my legacy," he said with reverence and love. "It comprises the totality of the wisdom I have gained in this world, or so I can only hope."

He sat quietly as I pored through the collection. There were books on art and warfare. Poems of love and jealousy and passions both dark and bright. Magical crystals held memories of cities that no longer stood, and a faded scroll catalogued the harvests of a small farm, seven centuries ago.

Every single thing in the cave was woven with magic. Every written word would bring wisdom to the reader, making her a better warrior, a wiser priest, or even a more skilled criminal. The works of art were astounding and showed the condition of human and demihuman nature from an objective view.[14]

"I must ask you one final favor, my friend," Old Sembyrn said. "I must enter Reflection, now; when I relive all the lives I have undergone. When that is done—and it could take centuries—Io will come for me. I can only hope my wisdom is enough to please him."[15]

I waited, not breathing, to hear his request. "I would like to give all of this to you, Danaenn, so that you might spread it across the world as you see fit. It is the greatest hope of my kind that the lessons we learn may someday help others. I ask only that you show no bias except this: give the items only to those you feel need them. After that, they will find their way across the world on their own. You must be a messenger of my experience, and I only hope my experience can help people understand themselves."[16]

This friend of mine had never lost the knack for amazing me, and this time was no exception. He spoke again, in tones less formal, but with no lack of emotion.

"This, dear one, is yours alone."

Sembyrn handed me a small book, a diary. Inside were a series of sonnets of such simple beauty that I could barely fight my tears.

Each sonnet was about me, my Queen. Each verse echoed my own thoughts, my fears, and each showed such deep understanding of me that I couldn't contain myself. It seemed as if, in that moment, and in every moment I read those verses to this day, that I know who I truly am.

I have not seen Sembyrn in over a year, now. I have wandered the world since, thinking back over the years, and frequently re-reading the verses Sembyrn wrote of me, of our time together, and of the lives we had led.

My Queen, I love you as I always have, and I have never stopped missing the Moon Court. I am returning home to pay homage to your Majesty, to make my report, and to accept any judgment you feel is warranted for my straying.

I humbly request, however, that you show leniency, and allow me my freedom to leave the Moon Court again after my time of restitution is completed. I have a task to perform, your Majesty. A task, and a final favor for the dragon who begins and ends my tale. A dragon called Sembryn.

With greatest sincerity and homage,
Danaenn Mistwhisper, Infiltrator

Despite graduating with a degree in journalism in 1995, a lack of free time conspires against Jay's writing more often. He works as a typesetter for a community college and does massage therapy on the side. While he's been gaming now for about 12 years, he's lucky if he can play more often than once a month, these days. Ah, life.

14. Many items in a steel dragon's composition are magical. Most of these items will be scrolls and books. The various magical *manuals* can be found in a composition, as they are these dragons' favorite items to create, due to their purpose of bettering those who study them. Also found here are *pearls of wisdom*, and other items created to improve the ones who use them. Spell scrolls and maps will also be in abundance, as well as non-magical artwork and writings that nevertheless contain a trove of information, musings, and wisdom.

15. After they have completed their last life and final entry into their Compositions, Steel dragons enter a period of lucid dreaming and hibernation which they call Reflection. During this time, the dragon lies in slumber, as they vividly recall every moment of every life they have led. All memories previously Vaulted will be re-opened as they occurred.

After reflection is completed, which could take centuries, the dragon is ready to die. Steel dragon legends hold that Io himself comes to take the dragon into the afterlife and tests the wisdom the steel has gained through his lifetimes. If the dragon passes the test, Io supposedly allows him or her to become one with his divine essence. If the dragon does not pass, the legends hold that he or she will be reincarnated, to begin the learning process anew.

16. Just before entering Reflection, it is common for a steel dragon to ask one last favor of his Soulbond; that she take the dragon's Composition and see that it is spread throughout the world, providing mankind with the dragon's wisdom. This is not done out of arrogance but out of a desire to aid the humans and demihumans that the dragon has lived among for so long.

If the Soulbond accepts the mission, she takes the parts of the Composition to the far ends of the world, and even beyond it. What she does with the Composition is up to her. She may give away the works or sell them. She may leave parts of the Composition from here to Bytopia, or she may leave the entire thing on a library's doorstep.

Not many Soulbonds refuse this final request, but there might be one or two hidden hoards of a dragon's wisdom, lying deep within mountain caverns, awaiting discovery.

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The Prayers of Stromp & Hevvel

To see how impressive dwarven magic can be, one need only look to the earth.

by Loren Coleman

illustrated by Bob Klasnich

NONMAGICAL BY NATURE, the dwarven race has always suffered a lack of wizardly spellcasters. But within the priesthood, dwarves of high faith have overcome their suspicion of magic and have even excelled in wielding the mystical power granted by their deities. Some of these faithful priests even add to the canon of magical prayers.

The following spells were developed by a pair of dwarven priests, Stromp and Hevvel. Although they followed different gods—Stromp's religion was centered in the Combat sphere and Hevvel's that of Elemental Earth—here they worked together to benefit the dwarven race upon whom their individual gods both looked favorably. These spells are unique in that they are only granted to dwarven priests and often apply strictly to members of the dwarven race. Combining the strong and courageous nature of dwarves with their sympathies for the earth, these spells apply to the combat or elemental (earth) spheres of devotion or both of them.

Dwarven Zeal
(Enchantment)
Level: 1
Sphere: Combat
Range: 5 yards/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 2 rounds/level
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: One dwarf/level
Saving Throw: Special

A variation of the *bless* spell, *dwarven zeal* focuses on the natural enemies of the dwarven race, goblins and orcs. When battling with such creatures and their kin (including half-orcs, orogs, and hobgoblins), this spell raises morale and provides a fierce fighting edge to the recipient.

Affected dwarves gain a +3 bonus to appropriate morale checks. If a morale check then fails, the dwarf may recheck every round until successful. If a morale check fails before the spell is cast upon a recipient, a second check is immediately granted with the +3 bonus. If this second check is successful, the dwarf may take his actions at the end of the round. While under the influence of this spell, the recipients gain an additional +1 bonus to their THAC0 and an additional +1 damage against any orc, orog, half-orc, goblin, or hobgoblin.

The material component of this spell is one drop of dwarven blood, freshly drawn from the dwarven priest casting the spell, for each dwarf under the spell's effect. This blood may be obtained from any existing wound or a small self-inflicted cut (no hit point damage). As the spell takes hold, the recipients realize they are under a magical effect and may choose to resist it, gaining a saving throw.

Mud in Your Eye
(Abjuration)
Level: 1
Sphere: Combat, Elemental (Earth)
Range: 10 yards
Components: V, M
Duration: 1 round/level
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: One creature
Saving Throw: Special

With this spell, the dwarven priest can hurl a glob of mud up to 10 yards, striking a target creature in the eyes and temporarily blinding it. An attack roll must be made by the caster, though the dwarven priest does gain a +1 bonus thanks to the dwarven affinity for the earth plus any missile bonus due to Dexterity. A saving throw negates the spell. Dwarves targeted by this spell gain a +1 bonus to their saving throw; all other creatures and races suffer a –1 penalty.

If the spell is cast successfully, the target creature is struck by the mud-glob and effectively blinded a number of rounds equal to the dwarven priest's level. While blinded, the victim suffers a –4 penalty to his THAC0 and, of course, cannot see where he is going. A determined effort to clear the eyes of mud can halve the remaining spell duration (rounded up); during that round, however, the affected target cannot attack and suffers a +2 penalty to armor class.

The material component is a small ball of earth or mud that is thrown at the spell's target.

Precious Affinity
(Divination)
Level: 1
Sphere: Elemental (Earth)
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Instantaneous
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: 10 yards/level
Saving Throw: Special

This minor form of the *locate object* spell relies on the dwarven affinity for precious metals and gems. When cast by the dwarven priest, it can be used to locate the nearest source of a single type of metal or gem.

The material component for *precious affinity* is a coin of the same precious metal or a gem of the type being sought. The spell is cast, and the representative coin or gem is tossed into the air. If there is a source of the sought-after precious metal or gem within the spell's area of effect, the representative item flies toward the nearest source. If any obstruction is met, such as a wall, the spell is interrupted at that point.

Magical barriers (such as a *wizard-locked* door), other-dimensional spaces (*bag of holding*), or antiscrying preparations effectively shield valuables from this spell. Also, if nearby people carry any form of the metal or gem (such as gold coins in a pouch or the gem-encrusted hilt of a sword), the spell indicates those objects as the closest source. Ore and unmined gems are also viable targets for the spell's focus.

Foundation
(Alteration)
Level: 2
Sphere: Combat, Elemental (Earth)
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 2 rounds/level
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: Dwarven caster
Saving Throw: None

Using the *foundation* spell, the dwarven priest borrows the stability of the earth, decreasing the possibility of him stumbling or being knocked down and making moving the priest more difficult.

For each level of experience, the dwarven priest gains a +1 bonus to any Dexterity check. With both feet planted against the ground, any attempt to move the dwarf physically requires a bend bars/lift gates roll. Even after a successful roll, if the caster can again place both feet against the ground, a second bend bars/lift gates roll is required. If set against a charge in this manner, the dwarven priest inflicts an extra 1d6 hp damage on a successful hit.

The dwarven caster must be standing on earth or stone to cast this spell. If during the spell's duration the recipient moves off earth or stone (to water or wood, for example), the spell is broken. The material component is a bit of crushed granite, which is sprinkled over the caster's feet as the spell is concluded.

Ignore Light Wounds
(Necromancy)
Level: 2
Sphere: Combat
Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: 2 rounds/level
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: Dwarf touched
Saving Throw: None

This spell amplifies a dwarf's impressive Constitution, temporarily hardening the recipient against minor wounds.

Any wound received after the spell's conclusion that inflicts 3 hp damage or less is not subtracted from the recipient's hit points but is instead recorded separately. Attacks that inflict more than 3 hp damage are not resisted by the spell.

If the "ignored" damage would ever drive the dwarf below –10 hp, the dwarf falls unconscious for 1d6 turns. The spell expires at the end of its regular duration or when the dwarf loses consciousness. At the end of the spell's duration, any "ignored" damage suffered by the dwarf simply vanishes, as he neither gains nor loses those hit points.

Shatter Metal
(Alteration)
Level: 3
Sphere: Combat, Elemental (Earth)
Range: 10 feet/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Instantaneous
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: One item
Saving Throw: Negates

This spell relies on the natural affinity that exists between dwarves and metalsmithing. Upon casting *shatter metal*, the dwarven priest creates a special link to any metal item within range. The priest detects any flaws in the item and then channels the magical energy of the spell into these flaws to shatter it beyond repair.

The affected item must be a single piece of metal (like an anvil or a bardiche blade) or one piece of a larger metal construct (a single portcullis bar or one link in an iron chain). A nonmagical item must immediately save vs. crushing blow at –2 or be destroyed.

Magical items are more resistant to this spell. A magical weapon, shield, or suit of armor receives a saving throw bonus equal to the total of its "pluses" (e.g., a suit of *chain mail* +3 would receive a +3 bonus to save, while a *long sword* +2, *+4 vs. fire-based creatures* would receive a +6 bonus to save). Regardless of the modifiers, an item always fails its save on a roll of 1. Other magical items composed partly or entirely of metal receive a standard +2 bonus; artifacts and relics, however, are impervious to this spell.

Metal constructs (e.g., iron golems) struck by this spell must make an unmodified save vs. spell or suffer 1d4 hp damage per caster level.

The material component for this spell is a thin, brittle metal rod that is snapped in half upon casting.

Stone Shell
(Alteration)
Level: 3
Sphere: Combat, Elemental (Earth)
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: Dwarf touched
Saving Throw: Special

Under the effects of this spell, a protective layer of rock forms over the dwarf recipient's skin. Though segmented and slightly pliable, this rock covering still inhibits the recipient's movement.

The stony, protective layer affords the dwarf a –4 bonus to AC. This is in addition to any other armor or magical effects in place. Movement rate is halved, however, and Dexterity bonuses are ignored, so the final AC reduction could turn out to be less than a –4. The *stone shell* can be destroyed in one round using a *dig*, *transmute rock to mud*, or *stone shape* spell.

The material component for this spell is a small piece of obsidian that may be reused. Dwarves who resist this spell gain their usual saving throw. Accepting the spell indicates automatic success.

Transmute Gem
(Alteration)
Level: 3
Sphere: Elemental (Earth)
Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: Permanent
Casting time: 1 round
Area of Effect: Gem touched
Saving Throw: Negates

This spell has two possible uses. It can transmute one type of gem into another of equal value, and it can increase the value of a gem.

When transmuting one type of gem into another, no saving throw is required. The new gem may be of any common gem type desired by the dwarven priest. If the priest has the gemology or appraising nonweapon proficiency, the priest may specify one attribute of the new gem in advance (such as size, color, or purity) so long as the gold piece value of the gem remains unchanged. If purity is increased, for example, size and color typically decrease.

If the dwarven priest attempts to increase the value of a gem using this spell, the gem must make a successful saving throw vs. crushing blow to avoid being ruined in the attempt. Advice from anyone skilled in gemology lends a +1 bonus to the saving throw. Proficiency in gemology by the priest casting the spell offers a +2 bonus. If the saving throw fails, the gem is ruined and drops to a flat base value of 10 gp. If it succeeds, roll percentile dice on the table below to determine the increased value:

Roll 1d100	Value increases by
01–50	25%
51–75	50%
80–95	100%
96–00	150%

A gem can be transmuted via this spell only one time. If this spell is ever cast on a gem more than once, it shatters. A faint magical aura of alteration magic remains on any gem that has been transmuted as a warning.

Clinging Earth
(Alteration)
Level: 4
Sphere: Elemental (Earth)
Range: 5 yards/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 round/2 levels of caster
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: 10 square yards/level
Saving Throw: Special

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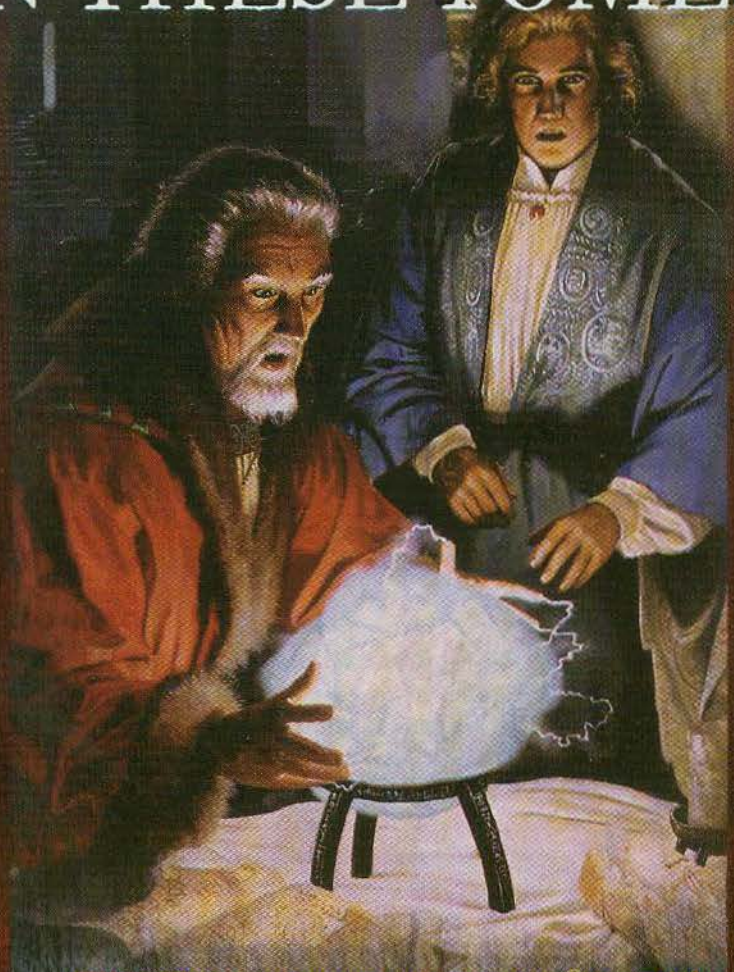

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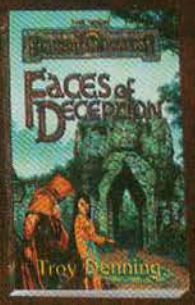

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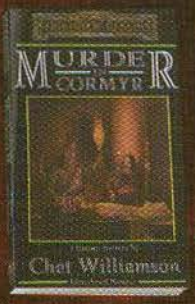

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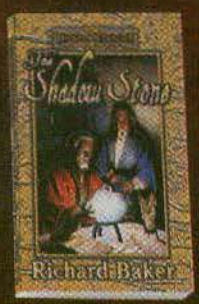

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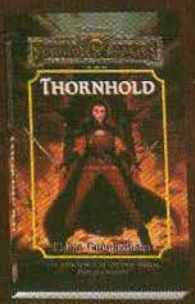

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When this spell is cast on the earth, it increases the antipathy of the terrain toward nondwarven creatures that try to cross the affected area. The ground softens, clinging to nondwarves and thereby impeding their progress.

Dwarves may move across the enchanted area without penalty. Other races and creatures must make a saving throw when entering the area. With a successful save, the creature or person may move at one half their normal movement rate. If engaged in combat in the affected area, affected creatures suffer a +1 penalty to their armor class. On an unsuccessful saving throw, nondwarves move at one-quarter their movement rate and suffer a +2 penalty to armor class. A critical failure (1 on 1d20) indicates the creature or person is stuck for one round, after which another saving throw may be made. While stuck, a +4 penalty is applied to armor class.

If movement was already affected by the terrain (i.e., swamp, soft sand) or spell (i.e., *slow*), the penalties for *clinging earth* apply to the readjusted movement rate value.

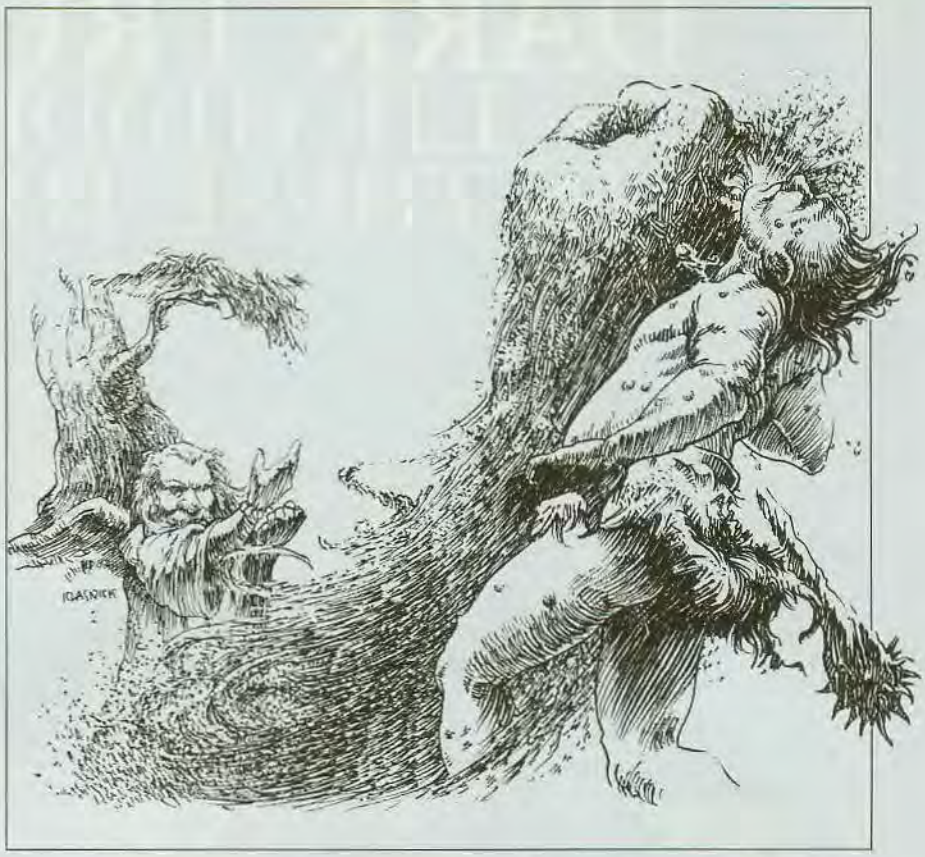
The material component for this spell is a clump of moist earth.

Stromp's Dwarven Cleaver

(Invocation)
Level: 4
Sphere: Combat
Range: 30 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: One target creature
Saving Throw: 1/2

When a dwarven priest casts this spell, a ghostly battle axe under the priest's control is called into being. The battle axe hovers over the priest during any round in which it is not directed to attack.

The *cleaver* may attack on the round it is summoned and once per round thereafter as the priest desires. It uses up the priest's attack for the round but does not prevent the priest from defending himself or performing other actions that require minimal concentration (such as walking). It strikes using the dwarven priest's THAC0 as if the priest were proficient with the weapon.



The axe inflicts 2–16 hp damage per hit. For every point of the cleric's Wisdom above 16, the *cleaver* gains a +1 bonus to THAC0 and a +2 bonus to damage. If the priest is behind the targeted opponent, the *cleaver* also attacks from the rear, gaining all appreciable bonuses and negating any defensive protections based on shields or Dexterity adjustments.

A save vs. spell negates half the damage of any successful strike. The material component of this spell is the dwarven priest's holy symbol.

Earth Fist

(Alteration)
Level: 5
Sphere: Combat, Elemental (Earth)
Range: 5 yards/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 round/level
Casting Time: 6
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

This spell summons magical energy from the Elemental Plane of Earth which then infuses nearby earth with a living force that can be directed by the dwarven priest to attack any structure or nondwarven enemy. There must be at least 1,000 cubic feet (10' × 10' × 10') of earth, rocks, or sand in the area for the spell to take hold. The earth reshapes itself into a huge fist capable of moving and striking anything within the spell's range.

Beginning the round of casting, the caster may direct the earthen "fist" to attack. This free attack is made at the end of the round and does not count against any other actions taken by the priest. The fist is considered a magical blunt weapon and causes 3–24 hp damage (or 1–2 structural points of damage) with each successful hit. The fist's THAC0 is the same as the priest's.

The material component of *earth fist* is any small gem worth 100 gp or more. The gem is destroyed in the casting.

Loren L. Coleman is a novelist and also freelances in game design and source writing.

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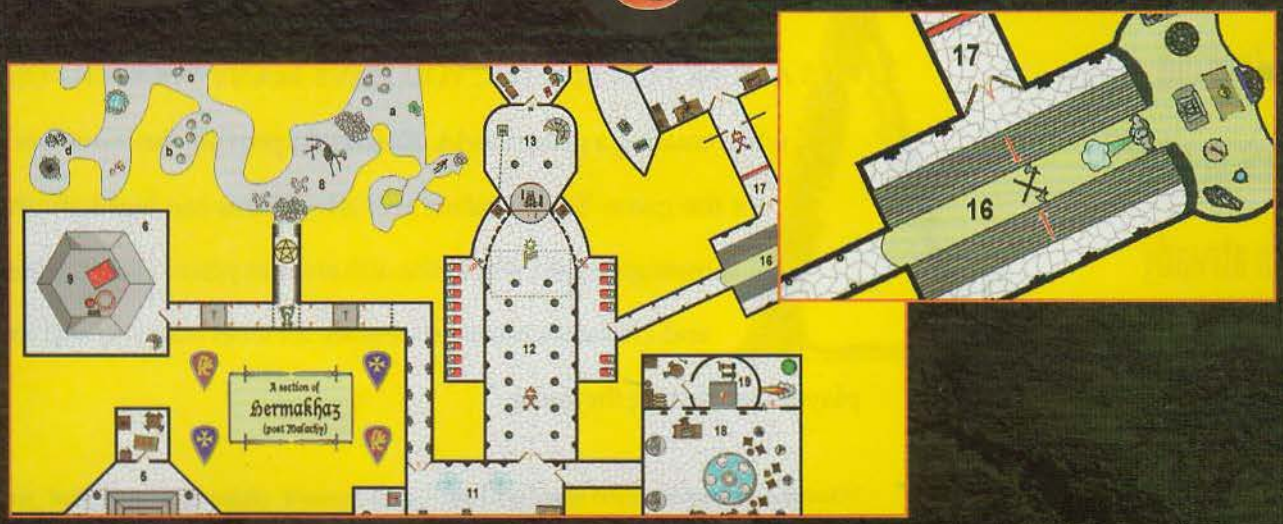

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The Campaign Journal

By looking back at what has already occurred, you can learn to plan ahead for what might be.

by
Lloyd Brown III

illustrated by
David Kooharian

AS A DUNGEON MASTER, YOU HAVE MANY TOOLS TO USE when creating a game world. Rulebooks provide the framework for the game. Supplements and adventures can highlight the campaign world where the action takes place. Dice, figures, and character record sheets are all tools that you and the players use during the game.

What the character record sheet is to the player, the campaign journal is to you, the DM. It is a record of accomplishments, changes, and additions to the game world. The campaign journal is an essential tool in maintaining consistency, avoiding unwanted repetition, and planning future adventures.

You can keep a journal with pen and paper, but a computer is infinitely better. A computer's ability to search, edit, and store text makes it the medium of choice for your campaign journal. A printer lets you print sections of your log for each player. However, these suggestions work just as well even with a pen and paper.

Starting the Journal

Ideally, you should begin the journal when you start a new campaign, but you don't need to discard your game world and start over to begin keeping a journal. Just start with the current party members, including brief statistics—name, class, level, race, titles, real property, and major magical items. Naturally, identify each player with his own character and label NPCs as such. Include the current campaign date, past dates when known, and present ongoing events that you might need to keep in mind (a sailing vessel due in two weeks, spell research that might result in a check for success in four more weeks, etc.). Anything else you can remember about recent events gives you a head start.

If you have already developed a calendar, you can use your own months and days in the journal. Include notes on how the calendar works so that you stay consistent. If not, just use the real-world calendar or call the first day "Day 1" and count from there. You can re-figure past dates as necessary whenever you develop that facet of your world.

Time and Periodic Events

Holidays

Near the beginning of the journal, list an upcoming holiday or two and announce them to the players. A seasonal holiday helps make your setting seem more realistic and perpetuates the illusion of the passage of years. If you haven't decided on any holidays for your world, make one up, write it down, and describe it to the players. Don't schedule a major holiday for which the priest characters have

duties on a date when those characters you know will be busy. The characters would have known better than to begin creation of a magical item the day before a major service.

Record impromptu holidays as they occur. For example, if an adventure requires the PCs to start in the middle of a holiday with an elven clan, make up an event, then record it. Once it is in your campaign journal, the PCs can be invited back next year or elven PCs can simply celebrate wherever they happen to be.

Birthdays

Each player should note his character's birthday, and you can remind the players as those dates approach. Birthdays are a good reminder that the characters will someday die of old age, if nothing kills them before then. They might spur on those obsessed with avoiding death or motivate others to make plans for their own inevitable passing (draw up a will, train students, hide away a legacy of treasure, etc).

Depending on the level of roleplaying, key NPC birthdays might be important, too. You needn't plan a special event for each birthday, but it does help to have them written down. You can't have NPCs staying the same age while PCs grow older! Spouses, children, followers, henchmen, mentors, and others in the campaign all age, too.

For any creature whose date of birth is not important but whose age is, you can rule that all unspecified characters and monsters age a year on the same day—usually the first of the year—just as thoroughbred racehorses are all considered to be born on January 1 when determining their eligibility for racing.

Monsters age also, and some of them grow more powerful as they mature. Every single monster doesn't require an exact birthdate, but the general age of dragons, RAVENLOFT® vampires, and other special creatures should be noted if they survive the initial encounter with the PCs. Then, when they meet the NPCs again, you are prepared to note the change in abilities if necessary. Simply compare the current campaign date (or projected date if you're still creating the adventure) to the last meeting and find the difference in years.

A computer's ability to search, edit, and store text makes it the medium of choice for your campaign journal.

Miscellaneous

Keep track of time as the PCs undergo major projects like construction, travel, spell research, magical item creation, etc. When the event is started, estimate the date it should end and watch it as other characters engage in their own activities. Until that date arrives, those characters are busy and unable to adventure without abandoning their project.

Other days to note in the journal include the following:

- Tax due dates.
- Deadlines for long-term contracts, quests, agreements, etc.
- Expiration time of long-duration spells, like *Leomund's secret chest*.
- Celestial events that might be important to non-standard spellcasters.
- The phases of the moon(s), since these affect lycanthropes (or even unfortunately infected PCs).

NPC Relations

The attitude of NPCs toward the PCs should be recorded. Those favorably impressed can seek out the party later for a favor, send their sons and daughters to train with them, reappear as followers, or warn the PCs of an enemy's activities.

Hostile NPCs might send spies, scry from time to time, place false wanted posters featuring a PC, send doppelgangers to take the PCs' place, spread rumors about PCs, buy on a PCs credit, or otherwise cause trouble. The severity and length of this enmity depends on the events that caused it. If you have a record of the original meeting of the PCs and the hostile NPC, you can decide how much of a problem the enmity becomes.

As the journal and the list of NPCs grows, you gain more opportunities to link adventures. Perhaps you are considering a waterborne adventure that

requires a merchant to hire the PCs to guard a ship from pirates. Check the campaign journal for a merchant who has employed the PCs before. If none exists, maybe another merchant the PCs know has branched out and added a ship to supplement his caravans.

Not every new adventure should be based on old NPCs, but occasionally an NPC who has benefitted from the PCs seeks them out when his own resources have come up short. When re-introducing these NPCs, use the opportunity to remind the PCs how much they have changed since their last encounter with the NPC.

Example: Based on your notes, you describe the following reunion to the players: *Oumal, once a familiar face in this hall, rushes toward you, raising his arms and embracing each of you in turn. "Xavier! It's so good to see you again. Your accent is nearly gone. These last five years have been good to you, Cianna. I hear my favorite young novice is now tutoring her own students. Sparrow, I stopped to make an offering at your sacred grove on my way into town. Last time I saw you, the trees wouldn't even talk to you, and now they serve and protect you. Amazing, isn't it?"*

Players are consequently reminded about the changes in their party, former comrades, and their own character's political or social promotions. Bringing back old NPCs is a good way to point out advancements for those who feel that their growth is stagnated because they are at high levels and advancement is slow.

Other NPCs to keep track of include the following:

- Enemies
- Rulers
- Allies
- Retired PCs
- Shopkeepers
- Neighboring landowners
- Servants
- Followers

Since each of these NPCs interacts with the party in different ways, record when, where, and how they met, what happened between them, and the NPC's general attitude toward the PCs.

Keep a chronicle of which monsters the party meets as well. As they encounter each new monster, you have a reference for how the party identified it when they last met. Some common monsters are generally called by name even from the beginning of the campaign. If the party contains dwarves that easily recognize goblins, for example, you can use the name "goblin" in your speech without fear of giving anything away. Rangers always recognize their species enemy.

On the other hand, if the PCs meet a hag and have no idea what it is, they must rely on your description. Part of the wonder of the game is discovering new things—including monsters. A "hag" is a creature in the book, with statistics and hit points. A nine-foot azure witch with Herculean grip, voracious appetite, and nails like razors is a terror.

Instead, let the players identify the monster. They might call her an ogress, a witch, or "giant blue lady." A would-be rules lawyer might declare her an ogre mage. In your notes, label the hag as such, so that next time the party encounters one, you can use the players' own pseudonym.

When you plan a new adventure, you can check your journal for monsters that the players are or aren't familiar with so that you can describe them appropriately. Then when you mention the appearance of a "giant blue lady," you bring back all of those horrible memories of rending claws, rancid breath, and skin like iron.

If this system becomes too cumbersome, simply have a more experienced adventurer offer his opinions on the monster while trading "fish stories" in a tavern, or use some other device to identify a few monsters. Perhaps a discovered bestiary has a drawing of a few of the common monsters in the area. Somebody in the game world must know what the monsters are, after all. Just make sure the information that you give them is limited in both scope and accuracy.

PC Possessions

Keep track of magical items with unknown properties like charges, secret powers, or uninvoked curses. A good way to keep track of hidden knowledge on a computer (or even paper) is to underline or italicize facts that the PCs don't yet know. If you are careful to remind yourself about hidden information this way, you are less likely to give away secrets to your players with a slip of the tongue.

Example: You write: *Cianna picked up a red* robe of the archmagi *and a magical ring. She is aware of the robe's AC benefit and has identified illusion magic in the ring. It is a* ring of air elemental command. *To be activated, it must be returned to the elemental plane of air.*

Some mundane treasures are also special and need mention in the journal. Some gold coins might be fakes, jewelry might be appraised incorrectly, or treasure maps might be real. Nonmagical treasures might have a special meaning to a particular group: for example, holy relics of a temple, totem items of a barbarian tribe, or the crown jewels of the dwarven prince. These items have an importance far greater than their gold-piece value. When the PCs try to sell a strange silver bowl, you are prepared to have the shopkeeper spit out his drink when he sees it or slam the door and refuse to speak to them. In many cases, a previous owner still hunts the item, which might have changed hands many times. Sometimes, not even death stops a determined pursuer!

Example: You note in your journal: *Xavier has started to carry around the curved dagger to try to blend in with the nomads. It is the symbol of office of the holy slayer (assassin) cult high priest, and Xavier will be attacked every week until dead.*

Similarly, characters who flash around expensive or valuable items might find themselves drawing the attention of thieves from every far corner of the city. Any time a character uses a magical item in sight of a large group of people, it should be recorded for later reference. Dueling in the street, saving the town from a humanoid tribe, or buzzing towers on a flying carpet all attract attention.

When you note such an event in the journal, you can draw on it later to design an attempted theft or robbery encounter against the PCs.

Advancements & Promotions

Level advancements might bring about changes in character ability or bring into play new roleplaying aspects. Followers, spells, granted powers, and other special considerations might accrue at certain levels. Priests who have a hierarchal rank commensurate with character level might find that they must duel for the level, accomplish a special quest, or donate treasure.

Keeping track of level advancements lets you plan ahead for level-related abilities. Many paladins, for example, call for a warhorse as soon as they are allowed (4th level). If you expect that Dan will announce this intention as soon as he erases that "3" on his character sheet and pencils in the new level, be ready ahead of time and foreshadow his quest by allowing the party to discover the first of four magical horseshoes that endow a normal horse with greater intelligence and minor magic abilities. Dan's character might not realize its importance immediately, but when two or more are discovered, the clues should fall into place.

Some characters gain students or apprentices at higher levels. A good source for trainees is someone who the PCs have helped in the past. The apprentice might be the son of the mayor whose city the PCs helped restore to order after civil war, the only survivor of a village that the PCs unsuccessfully defended (this one brings a mix of emotions that can be a fantastic source for roleplaying among the PCs), or a growing child if the party members have any. Of course, the young NPC does not necessarily gravitate toward his parents' calling but might instead be attracted to another PC. If you're interested in allowing PC wizards to gain apprentices, the *Complete Sha'ir's Handbook* contains an excellent section on a wizard's students that is appropriate for any wizard character.

Promotions due to position should be noted, too. If a character is knighted, buys or earns a military commission, or secures a judicial chair, the post should be noted. You can bring this change into play by centering the next adventure on the trappings of the new office. Being knighted might mean being called on to slay a murderous beast. An army officer might need to quell a rebellion in a remote province. A judge might have to deal with bribery attempts, fend off assassins, and purge his new office of corruption.

Write in opportunities for the PC to make use of proficiencies, class abilities, or languages that are unique to him.

New Life

New players or new characters should naturally be included in the journal. If a player takes over an NPC or brings back a retired character, note the change. For a brand new character, you can draw upon your journal for background or create an entirely new introduction, first checking to make sure you haven't overused that particular technique in the past. If Dan says, "You know, I think the last four new characters all started out as rescued prisoners, too," you haven't used your log properly.

For background for the new character, try something a little more original. The beginner might be a former enemy, he might be disenchanted with his former comrades in another adventuring party, or he might be a former employer of the PCs. Check your journal for NPCs who were favorably impressed with the party. They or someone they influence are candidates for joining the party.

New PCs also come from the children of current or past characters. These new PCs can be played by the same player, a different player, or might be played by the DM until the parent character is retired or killed. These special PCs have their entire history recorded in the campaign journal, so it is not necessary to create a new history when creating the character. The new character also has excellent sources for learning proficiencies or class skills—the youngster could have learned from any of the older PCs, henchmen, peers, or schools. The journal provides extensive background for this sort of information.

Adventuring groups are constantly picking up new members and losing others. Always record which PCs go on each new adventure. A player might be absent. His character might be engaged in spell research or serving a prison sentence. When recording the attitude of NPCs toward the party, be sure that it is the right party. Your group has turnover among both players and characters. An NPC that the party has met in the past might not know any of the current adventurers. Don't let the players catch you making that mistake!

Character Death

Always record all information concerning the death and treatment of dead PCs and key NPCs. The status of the dead becomes important if the party tries to raise or speak with the dead character. It can also be used later to haunt the group.

Example: Your journal entries let you set the stage to remind the PCs of a fallen comrade: *Two years ago today on the peaceful field below you, Nest met her end at the hands of the trolls who destroyed her grove. It seems like only yesterday she walked casually through the daisies with her golden hair and white robes blowing in the constant breeze. You can see her there—literally! There she is, wearing the robes not of a druid but of the Holy Order of Guardians. No, it can't be her. This woman is a little too old and far too pale, but she is so like your old friend that she must be a close family member. Surely this is no chance meeting.*

Players love being reminded of old characters this way. Tying them in to something larger and permanent brings the campaign to life and, incidentally, makes them a little less reluctant to lose a treasured character. To make plans for death, custom and law generally allow for a character to write a will. If you want, you can include the characters' wills in your journal, whenever they happen to provide you with the basic information.

For better game interaction, have the player actually write up a will, which you can decorate with a fancy font and border if you wish and print out for the player to keep in a safe place. Whether you or the player keeps the will, bring it out on the character's death to determine what should happen to the character's property. Wills solve many inter-party disputes before they even start. To be complete, wills should specify contingencies for resurrection or raising, whether or not to reincarnate, distribution of property, treatment of the body (burial, cremation, disintegration) when death is final, and other factors.

Priests and other religious characters (such as paladins) might have certain restrictions to consider. Their religion might require a certain prayer or ritual at death. You can let the player decide most of these things personally, disallowing anything that conflicts with established rules.

Bringing characters back from the dead requires considerable attention alone. Does the character make some provision for paying for the spell? Is raising even allowed by his religion? Does he want to be reincarnated if he can't be raised? Does the character prefer to use the priest or wizard version of reincarnation? Does he have a clone prepared somewhere? How long ago was the clone sample taken? Where is the sample stored and who is preparing the clone? The player should address all of these issues in his will, and the DM should keep a copy in the campaign journal.

On rare occasions you can get away with having something special happen with dead PCs or close NPCs. The dead PC might arise as a ghost to protect another player's temple or stronghold. Another might await anxiously a *speak with dead* spell so he can blurt out information vital to an adventure. A poorly treated henchman might haunt a wizard's laboratory as a poltergeist, causing extensive damage. In all of these cases, notes from the campaign journal can make the event consistent with past events and inspire interesting twists and reminders to keep the players immersed in the game.

Players have a right to limited access to your records of their character's exploits.

Player and Character Information

Players have a right to limited access to your records of their character's exploits. Using a computer resolves this situation easily. You can copy those sections of the log that contain information that the character knows and print them for the player to keep. Hidden information you keep to yourself. Using different fonts or italicizing text, as mentioned, makes this job easier.

Even better, make player copies a habit after every successful adventure. If you have a knack for writing or wish to develop one, try turning the PC's actions into a short story, making their version into a work of fiction. You might have to give away some information about the villains that the PCs don't learn right away, just don't give away anything vital. Your players love being able to look back on their own exploits this way.

Players who have written records of their characters' accomplishments can call on people, places, or things that the character knows. If PCs need a ship, they might seek out the merchant guild they saved from pirates last year. If they need to hide out for a while after a disastrous failure, perhaps that thankful smuggler the PCs didn't turn in could pay off his debt by sneaking them out of town. The sage who has a cupboard full of rare herbs and medicinal plants courtesy of the heroes' dangerous exploits might be willing to answer a few questions. High level heroes can call in favors from peasants, merchants, and nobles from across a world.

The PCs might want to pay attention to the villains as well. Maybe they have

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heard rumors that Ponowa, the rogue shaman, is gathering another band of savages for a raid on civilized lands. The PCs want to scout the plains and speak with the nomadic tribes to find out more information. Consulting your journal, you can easily find that he is still resting and healing from their last encounter. Allow the characters to search the plains with little trouble, and tell them they hear no news.

Allowing the players access to information that their characters have means that they don't need to ask yes-or-no questions—for instance, "Is there an armorer in town?"—whenever they set out to do something that should be routine. Instead of asking you a tedious litany of questions about each shopkeeper—Where can I find him? What is his name? How much does he charge?—the player can make a decision based on what she knows about the different armorers in town. One might charge too much for poor quality goods. One might not sell to characters of a different faith.

Example: *Carol, the player, says "Cianna plans a trip to see Morgan, the dwarven smith. On the way to his shop, she picks some fresh apples for his pony and grabs some toys for the kids."*

Encourage players to add their own notes to their copies. Remembering that Morgan had a favorite pony and six children is certain to make bargaining over the price of a suit of barding a little more pleasant and possibly more advantageous. Allow players to check notes as often as they wish before an adventure, but be sure to limit the time allowed for checking notes during an adventure. Players who sift through piles of past adventures trying to find the name of a certain pickpocket encountered a year ago slow down play. Instead, make them roll an Intelligence check to see if the character can remember the information. The log is supposed to aid play, not slow it down.

An alternative method is to require the players to keep their own journal of character knowledge. They might miss some details, but any lost information can be recaptured by comparing journals. The few details that can't be recovered completely can be attributed to the normal (imperfect) memory of the character. When the character meets an NPC whose name he can't remember (that is, the player can't find it in his journal), the embarrassment the player enacts becomes quite real!

Planning Further Adventures

An aid to planning adventures is perhaps your journal's greatest asset. To help your planning, you should record the effects on the game world caused by the actions of the PCs and NPCs close to them. The changes needn't be on a grand scale, but if every action brings consequences, no matter how small, the campaign becomes truly interactive.

As an example, a low-level party recovers some stolen property for a merchant. The party defeats the robbers, one of whom might hold a grudge. His feelings are mitigated somewhat by time, but the same thug might end up on the payroll of a much bigger crook, years later. The thug might recognize the illusionist who masquerades as a bard, tell his friends about the warrior's specialization, or warn others about the rogue with the *ring of invisibility*.

The merchant who was robbed, on the other hand, tells his friends about the helpful and courageous heroes who saved his goods. One of these friends might be a wealthier merchant who needs a new security chief to guard his warehouses. Another could be a rogue whose curiosity is piqued by the story of the robbers' minor treasure left behind. Yet a third might lose her heart to the tales of the paladin's dashing exploits.

Every single detail shouldn't (and couldn't!) be detailed in the journal, but the events should be recorded, with major changes being noted. Minor events, like those stemming from the capture of the robbers, can be written in later, as you need an NPC or adventure hook or sub-plot.

Basically, anything that you write here is a seed for another adventure. All seeds don't grow to maturity, of course, and neither do all adventures. Some of these happenings resolve themselves and never affect the PCs again. Some resurface as red herrings, some become subplots, and a few develop into full adventures.

A key consideration when planning adventures is deciding whether the action centers on one particular individual. An adventure that centers around a duel for the Great Druid position and the political maneuvering before and after the change of command naturally involves the druid character more than the others. By reviewing who has been in the spotlight and who has been ignored, you can keep players from feeling left out.

Check the journal when writing or adapting adventures to make sure that one character's name doesn't keep popping up more often than it should or that another isn't left out entirely. If one player is being ignored, change the adventure so that his or her PC has a chance to be important. Write in opportunities for that PC to make use of proficiencies, class abilities, or languages that are unique to him.

It takes a couple of adventures before you can draw fully on your journal, but once it starts to grow, it becomes more and more useful. Your journal soon turns into a very specialized, very apt guidebook to running your campaign. Use it to keep your game consistent, maintain harmony within the party, and plan adventures especially tailored to the PCs. Your journal will return your attention and let you keep your campaign dynamic and memorable for as long as you keep it.

Lloyd's players joke about his tradition of keeping his campaign notes on 3 × 5 cards, but they appreciate it when he remembers exactly what that talking sword can do, or where they left the keys to the keep. On the other hand, sometimes they wish a particularly nasty curse would just "go away," so Lloyd keeps those precious cards in a very safe place.

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DMDA98

Falcon's Bazaar

The Pale Falcon Traders search the Flanaess for the highest quality merchandise money can buy.

by
Noel Graham

illustrated by
Jim Crabtree

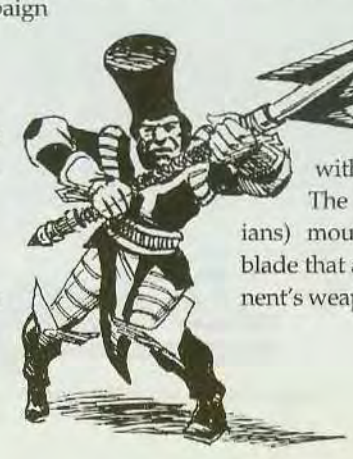
"Money makes the world go 'round, some say. If commerce is the source of this coin, it's odd that so little attention has been given to the objects of that trade. Each culture's artisans might produce similar goods, but rarely can they be said to be identical. For example, the proud owner of a shield from the gnome armorers of the Kron Hills might find that it includes a secret pocket (suitable for maps or documents) on its inside surface. Also, Highfolk doeskin is renowned above most such leathers for its durability in the face of excess muck and the ravages of inclement weather.

What follows is a sampling of the cultural trade goods so often overlooked by the casual campaign. While these descriptions reflect the Pale Falcon Traders search across the Flanaess of Oerth, similar items likely exist on most worlds. Prices shown here are appropriate for the City of Greyhawk. These prices should be adjusted to reflect the significant effects of transport and demand. DMs should also adjust prices to fit their campaign economies.

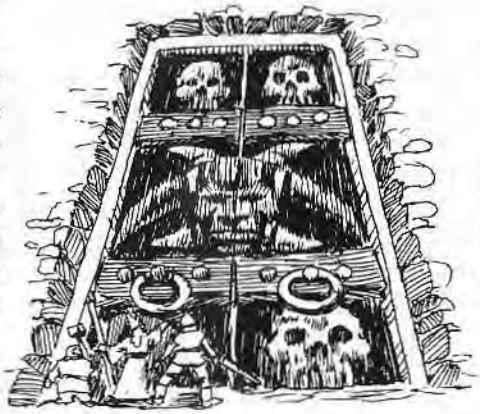
Angon

Thick of body and long on edge, this battle spear looks every bit as fierce as the famed and feared northlanders who wield them. The stalwart defenders of Ratik developed the angon to combat neighboring barbarians by shortening the haft length of their spetums to a more manageable 6–10 feet. Although many incarnations have appeared since then, two forms—the serrated and the fork-bladed angons—have become commonplace.

In Ratik the fighting end is mounted with a crossbar below the trefoil blade to prevent dying foes from closing upon the haft. Some also possess a spiked or bulbed buttcap or are shod with metal for the entire length. The Fruztii (A.K.A. Frost Barbarians) mount a distinctive dropped-V blade that angles back to catch an opponent's weapon or clothing.



The standard angon inflicts 1d6/1d8+1 hp damage, while serrated versions cause 1d6+1/1d10 hp damage. The forked bladed angon is cumbersome to use (–1 to hit) but doubles standard damage against creatures of size L or larger. While certainly not a missile weapon, those of exceptional strength have sent them aloft for short distances (minimum 15 Strength to throw, range: 2/3/5). Only the longest Angons can be set to receive a charge (minimum 9' length).



Bracers

One of the most prized forms of magical defense, mundane bracers are curiously overlooked. In battle they provide all the advantages of a buckler while being more socially acceptable. The sight of ornate bracers alone has given pause to opponents of the otherwise unarmored.

The bracers' popularity among mages, particularly in the frozen northlands, is understandably on the rise. Hidebound wizards are quick to declare that no armor short of elven chain is useable by spellcasters but admit they are far from the final authority on this matter.

Bronzewood Portals

Dark times have always brought forth an increase in roguish activities. In answer, the joiners of Dyvers have fashioned these doors and shutters from the stoutest wood to be found. Each board is merloned and furrowed to ensure perfect security, and the whole banded in cold wrought iron. They come in an assortment of standard sizes and single or paired fashions, ready-fit in bronzewood frames (20–175 gp for doors; 11–85 sp for shutters). Peculiar widths and heights for odd tower casements or donjon passages can be procured by special arrangement.

What these portals lack in elegance is made up by quick-shipping to carvers in Greyhawk City. Designs or crests can be added to suit the wildest fancy, as can superior, hinged view-ports with tiny bars (6 gp) or bronze-latched bow slits (3 gp). For even greater resistance to force, add one or more bronzewood crossbeams (9 sp) carved to match for no further coin. Bronzewood portals impose a +1 penalty to all open doors rolls. Crossbeams impose a further +1 penalty, each.

Charcloth Tin

Charcloth, popular in the Wild Coast and surrounding lands, is fabric blackened over embers to the point just before burning. When used with flint and steel, it aids greatly when starting a fire, particularly when dampness affects the tinder.

Charcloth provides a –2 proficiency check bonus to any attempt at fire building or negates penalties for wet tinder. No more than a single piece of charcloth is useful to aid this process, though any additional pieces certainly burn, if used.

A charcloth tin is a hand-sized container split into two discs that press tightly together when closed. A small hole allows hot air to harmlessly escape through the domed top. A new tin comes complete with cloth sufficient to start ten fires, though when filled a tin readily holds twice that amount.

Dagger Sash

This is a type of baldric decorated with tassels, lace, or the like to which multiple smallblade scabbards are attached by small rings or ties. The sash, in turn, is secured to a waist belt or weapon harness so that the scabbards are well concealed beneath a cloak or hood cloth. The skillful tie this knot so that one quick pull both loosens the sash and spins the scabbards to quick reach.

Doublebow

This weapon is a type of crossbow produced by dwarven master weaponsmiths of the Principality of Ulek. Based upon the light arbalest, the body of the doublebow is cored and slotted through the lower portion of the "tunnel." The casting string is doubled for about three-fourths of its length, the second string threaded through the tunnel slots and attached at the opposite end. One quarrel is placed atop, as usual, with the second inserted within.

The basic benefit of the doublebow is that it launches two attacks at once (both using the same attack roll; either both hit, or both miss).

The added draw reduces range (4/10/16), but the doublebow was not designed for sharpshooting. Incautious word has it that certain of those smiths have mastered a technique, said to include mineral baths and a fully recurved bow, that allows full firing range (damage remains unchanged). If these special variants exist, they should be considered dwarven weapons of quality (at +1 to hit) in every sense.

Note that unlike the Rhennee's barge-mounted double crossbow, which is essentially two bulkily combined heavy arbalests, the doublebow fires both bolts simultaneously at the same target. The design is intended to increase initial damage, presumably before switching to a melee weapon. Another advantage involves use of the string block mechanism. If a quarrel is loaded on the lower string before the block is set, it too is effectively held in place.

With practice, users can affect a "quick shot" from harnessed doublebows when needed. The weapon speed factor becomes 4 in these cases, and the attacker suffers a –2 attack penalty for lack of aim. Because of the many variables, the "quick shot" cannot be effectively taught as a proficiency.

Double Mail

This is another dwarven invention employed by heavy troops of the Principality of Ulek and Keoland. Where standard chain mail employs a single link to connect its neighbors, double mail weaves a second set throughout the first. The armor weighs as much as normal chain mail and a shield but protects as well as splint mail. Outside trade between clansmen, pricing can reach as high as thrice again that of standard chain mail, if a sale can be negotiated at all.

Double mail is superior in manufacture and is less prone to smithing flaws than plate mail while still less costly. Refitting and repair are also less troublesome, both real concerns for standing forces. Perhaps best of all, its enhanced protection is delivered while leaving both hands free to wield weapons.

Elite troops, such as Prince Corond's Knights of the Forge, typically pay the added expense of using adamantine or some similar light-weight alloy in their double mail. An internal leather harness distributes the armor's weight more evenly, reducing fatigue from extended wear.

Draw-Mouth Quiver

Draw-mouth quivers are curious contraptions, no doubt of gnomish or halfling devising, topped with loose cloth or leather through which lacing has been threaded. It is intended to prevent accidental loss of bow shafts but greatly hinders their speedy draw. An unopened quiver adds 2 to initiative rolls under ideal conditions. Still, for lashing to pack saddles or the like, they ensure ready access to full quivers when time is of the essence.

Dwarven Stone Scroll

The priests of Dumathoin designed this device to ensure that dwarven secrets remain in dwarven hands. At first glance it looks like no more than a thick stone rod placed within a scroll tube of diamond braided wire. Upon closer inspection, it can be seen that the "scroll" is actually composed of a number of discs. Each such collection concerns some guarded matter, be it construction designs for the dwarven catapult, safe passage to someplace hidden, or even a clan's treasured mead recipe. Each disk is engraved with dwarven runes surrounded by graphic elements, more of which decorate the other side of the disc.

Once stacked within the tube, a keyed dowel is inserted into the notched center hole of each disc to lock in the opposite endcap. If the discs are not properly aligned when the dowel is removed, the discs shatter into tiny shards. Through some favor of the Keeper of Secrets, no magic short of a *wish* can reassemble a shattered scroll.

Notable examples have been found secured with miniature *flame strike* spells. When opened improperly, not only were the discs reduced to useless dust, but the handler and all non-dwarves within 10 feet of the scroll were subject to the flame attack. The 8d4+8 hp damage should be divided evenly between targets with any leftover dice going to the handler. It is worth mention that Dumathoin's definition of "non-dwarf" includes the derro and duergar. Runes carved along the exterior presumably hold some clue to successfully unlocking the scroll.

Rogues and parties of ill intent need not inquire. Dwarven smiths only inscribe stone scrolls for ruling nobles or their official agents.

Fineplate

If table service of gold or silver is the right of kings and high nobles, then fineplate should justly find its place with the feasts of those close in spirit, if not station. Some variety exists, as befits the many splendored halls throughout the Flanaess. Each is fired by master artisans for strength and refinement, and all sets are warranted both unique to each client and as identical between pieces as mortally possible.

A full accounting of pricing is beyond the scope of this work, as a great assortment of serving platters, bowls and broth boats exists. Listed prices reflect a basic service of full (dinner) plate, small plate, and hand bowl for one Lord or Lady. To service a Lord's feast with crests in gold leaf could cost thousands of gold pieces.

Those from the Kron gnomes, called "Tolshiffe" (or frostglaze) for their pure color, are engraved with crests or sigils before glazing. Additional relief or design work along the broad borders can be had in the widest selection, as can leaf of precious metals, for modest fees.

From the elves of the Duchy of Ulek comes an almost ethereal, pellucid fineplate which includes the sparkling powder of precious stones (7 gp). One of the best examples of this fineplate can be found in Verbobonc's Lord's District at the exclusive Wayfarers Hostel. Their emerald plates are carved in relief along the edges with the viscounty's company and chased with gold filigree.

The Lortmil dwarves take a much more robust approach with fineplate of polished and glazed slate, granite, and the like. Most are etched with dwarvish runes and sport high edges for safe portioning. A highly serviceable table set for revels of Underholme and safe from drunken loss!

Beyond the standard array of accessories, stone bowls up to cauldron size are available with lids, ideal for alchemical use. The largest ones hold up to 50 gallons and come set in iron stands included with the purchase (41 gp). Fineplate of such metals as copper or steel may be available upon special request.

In the eastern Flanaess, fineplate and other forge items may be supplied by the Iron Wolf Foundry, shipping from the port of Irongate. These pieces are identifiable by a small, unobtrusively placed wolf's head forge mark. Once negotiations with representative "Ironmongers" have concluded (that is, the fate of the Iron League is determined in the campaign), the Pale Falcon Traders plan to offer a full selection of Iron Wolf trade goods.

Galda Oil

This sweetly aromatic lamp oil is an extract of Cairn Hills Galda trees. Popular enough in crystal lamps and dank surroundings, the oil has also been distilled so as to burn nearly half again as long as regular lamp oils. Sweet meat glazes and pastries also benefit from a few drops when both are cooked thoroughly.

Gnomish Neckpurse

With the resurgent popularity of circlets and headbands, it should come as no surprise that the Tinkerfolk would conceive of some odd but pragmatic variant. Since most serve the basic purpose of binding back voluminous hair, what better place to secrete a pouch of small treasure than beneath it? Our selection includes engraving in the style of most cultures to aid in the diversion.

The pouch is tiny, indeed, but large enough to keep a few coins or gems out of sight of rosined fingers. Beware, for rogues might carry smallblades or lock picks in such a pouch. Braided-in wire or delicate-seeming chains could serve as trap wires, saws, or as in the case of one courtesan assassin, a garotte-fillet whose end bob included a bind-cutting blade.

Gorgetal

A piece of what has become known as "Festival" or "Feasting Armor," the gorgetal began as simple protection for the neck, then was transformed into a fashionable ornamentation to clothing. Week-long festivals, where armor is disdained, moved nobles to look for such a compromise. While gorgetals do not improve armor class, they do provide AC 8 against called shots to the neck and foil most attempts at strangulation or garroting (by roleplaying or 1-in-20 chance of a successful attack).

In Keoland, gorgetals are concealed beneath the ruffs popular there. Many a standing collar in Nyrond is actually a gorgetal decorated in silk or lace. Persistent rumors bespeak a variety ensorcelled to turn aside even the blades of vorpal weapons, but this appears to be no more than idle fancy.

Gullet Guardian

Another piece of "Festival Armor" that has become popular with merchants and caravaneers. It resembles a misplaced leather breastplate or over-large broadbelt, protecting from the waist up rather than the shoulders down.

Custom tooling and scenework is the norm, with most identifiable to a particular crafter or owner. They are praised highest in areas of sweltering heat or where custom frowns upon casual armor wear. When first encountered, the whole may be taken as some outlandish attempt to gird an expansive gullet. Yet, those who wear them warrant they protect where most vulnerable to common attack.

Gullet guardians provide a +1 improvement to armor class or AC 8 for called shots to the frontal body trunk. They must be specially crafted to provide any defense for the back, since comfort and social etiquette drove their design.

Honey Dust

Young lords ever dream of bard-song lasses whose skin and tresses sparkle like gold to their eye alone. Attend the next noble revel bedecked in glistening honey dust, and prepare to capture his heart.

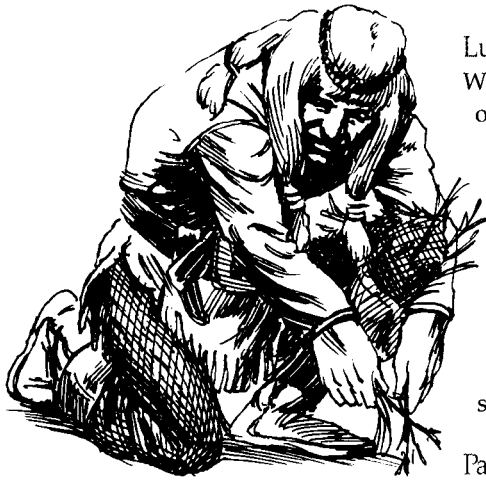
This honey dust is prepared from High Vale bees, supping on only the finest flower nectars. The powder has a delicate aroma that is sure to enchant and is applied to the body with its own goose down brush. Before you fret, we have it on good authority the sweet flavor remains unmarred. Each jar contains enough to cover a slight lass twice over.

Ipp Candle

The radiance produced by the candlepots is too weak for any use beyond providing light for squinted reading or as an unobtrusive beacon. Instead, this mixture of tallow and Ipp tree sap is burned because its aroma drives away insect pests. (Note that the bitter aroma does not drive away insects of the giant variety, whose appetites are more tenacious than those of their miniscule kin.) If you plan travel near fen or bog lands, take along a few. If lit just after moonrise, they last until just before dawn.

Jalzanda Oil

Jalzanda flowers bear a pungent oil when pressed at the peak of their late spring bloom. The essence is useful for calming rambunctious children or, when taken as a warm decoction, helps sooth troubled slumbers. No more than a few drops are usually needed. If taken in large quantity, the resultant state so resembles death that the unthinkable might occur before waking. It's worthy of mention that spells like *raise dead* and *resurrection* have no effect, since the recipient isn't dead, though a simple *neutralize poison* rouses the subject.

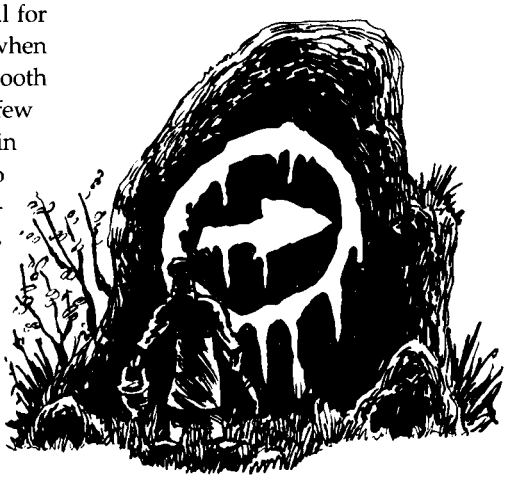


Laceleather Pantalons

Leatherworkers commonly use leftover cuttings to create a supply of laces and straps, except in more isolated locales where demand is less. In the Celadon and Gamboge forests, a growing tradition calls for weaving the lace leather into pairs of rugged legware. Their broken coloring and ease of attaching foliage also aids the wearer's ability to blend with natural surroundings.

Those with the rangerlike hide in shadows ability increase this ability by 3% or negate the time/materials requirement of the camouflage proficiency (see *The Complete Ranger's Handbook*, p. 82). Foliage can be readily attached for an additional 2% bonus.

The small pantalons are sized to garb gnomes and halflings (6 gp), while the larger sizes fit elves and humans (10 gp). Like fees apply for custom tailoring with the finest dyes.



Luminous Paste

While its appearance may remind some of Underdark fungi, the prime component comes from the Phostwood tree. Fresh paste glows well in moonlight, making for an excellent trail marker or for telling friend from night-stalking foe. A signal speculum can be quickly created by applying some to any handy surface. Each half-pint jar is sealed with hardened sap to preserve duration.

Pace Beads

Treasure maps are notorious for inaccuracies due to distortion of distance. From the priests of the Patron of Travels comes this simple tool that aids in all manner of long measurement. This Power is Fharlanghn on Oerth and Selene in the Realms (or even Celestian or Hermes on the planes), though most worlds have a similar Power.

Pace beads take the form of a length of cord knotted into two parts, one with nine beads and the other with four.

Every other time the same boot touches ground, pull aside a bead from the group of nine—this is ten feet. After ten such pacings (100'), pull aside a bead from the group of four. With practice, pace beads can be used to coordinate battlefield movement. When not in use, they can be kept at hand by looping around the wrist.

Padded Leather Armor

Originally the backing upon which other armors were crafted, padded leather was first pressed into service in the central Flanaess states. Where standard leather requires no more than frames and boiling cauldrons, padded leather takes the process one stage simpler, quilting a pliable padding between two pieces of supple leather.

The resultant jacks are more comfortable than their oil-cured cousins while similarly protective (AC 8). They also have the advantage of easy maintenance and significantly better resistance to grime and weather. Crests and sigils can be readily embroidered or sewn on, as can shoulder or elbow guards. If kept in good repair, metal circlets or plates may be later attached to affect makeshift ring or scale mail.

Not only has it become popular with veteran militias, padded leather can also be found beneath the chain mail of lords and leaders. Thus, in hot climes where chain and plate is often removed until battle, the lord retains some measure of defense.

Reedmace Shafts

Reedmace, or cattails, are common enough throughout the Flanaess marshlands—leave it to the Yeomanry to put them to good use. Once harvested, the shafts are cured in salt water to keep them from softness and decay. The heads are then steeped in oil, the whole lacquered, and flights attached. The diligent Yeomen make excellent quarrels of them, but a longer variety with better fletchings serves the longbow as well.

Perhaps they don't fly the truest (–1 penalty to THAC0, and all ranges are reduced by 2), but they are easily ignited and reliably stored until needed. Keep a few in the gatehouse as warning shot or to raise quick alarm.

Rhizian Shield Harness

The northlander barbarians have developed a fighting style that allows battle use of a shield while both hands remain free. Part of this technique derives from the use of this harness, which secures the shield full across the shoulders much like the shell of a dragon turtle. A simple pull-pin mechanism allows the shield to be quickly freed from the harness and brought to fore, if needed.

For shield-bearers and warriors not so trained, the harness still provides a more comfortable means of carrying a shield on a long march than the neck-wearying shoulder baldric. The dishonorable likewise think twice before attacking the user from behind

Santal Wood Incense

Just as the oil of the Santal tree is used in the mixing of perfumery, setting the rolled heartwood to smolder soothes breathing ailments. The effects of stale or noxious airs, such as smoke and crypt fumes, are neutralized for the duration of burning. The incense is also known to have similar effect against magical vapors if the heartwood is first left to soak in a potion-bath of uncertain type, most likely *sweet water*.

Santolin

From the lower Sheldomar Valley comes this pale lavender fabric praised by mercers and sartors alike for its soft touch and cool wear. More durable than linen, more comfortable than wool, and less costly than silk, Santolin seems the perfect cloth.

Samples have already gained favor with certain nobles of Veluna, where they've become fashionable and much-sought garments. Local crop-holders and loomists seem assured of bountiful harvests for next season along with a prismatic selection of colors.

Silver Tissue

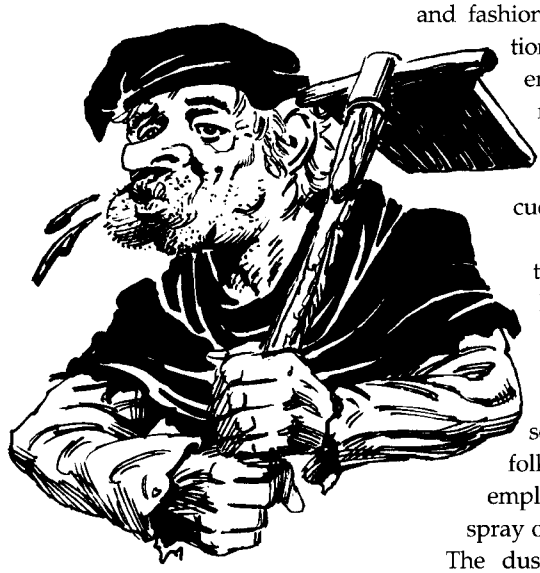
This Celenese fabric of silk and silver strands is woven together into a diaphanous cloth so delicate one might believe it possible to tear with bare fingers. Rather, it is stronger than any similar cloth of comparable thickness.

Because of its prohibitive cost, silver tissue is most commonly used in human lands as tailory accent for wealthy patrons, as cuffs or cloak liners. Wistful tales of dancing olven lasses clad only in moon-gowns of the tissue exist, if only in the dreams of heart-struck human men.

Talwuc

In the Yeomanry and Sea Prince lands, where rain is plentiful, local troops have fashioned the talwuc (which best translates as "rain tabard") for keeping armor and body dry. Starting with an oversized tabard, they sew much of the side cloth together and treat it with a water-repellent plant resin.

The result is inexpensive, has wide sleeves for ease of movement, and won't blow open as a cloak might. A waist lashing and hood or brimmed helm completes the ensemble. Use the unspent coin on crest or trim embroidery to further enhance the respect of onlookers.



Tamal Leaves

Originally introduced from the jungles of Amedio, this pipeweed broadleaf isn't used for smoking at all. Rather, it is shredded and chewed by those who appreciate its "richness" of flavor. Tamal is grown domestically in the southlands of the Principality of Ulek and Keoland and is supplied in "six finger" (twice the amount held between the thumb and two first fingers) leather pouches. Tamal is available as cured "chaw cut" or packed with citron zest to preserve fresh taste.

Walking Stick

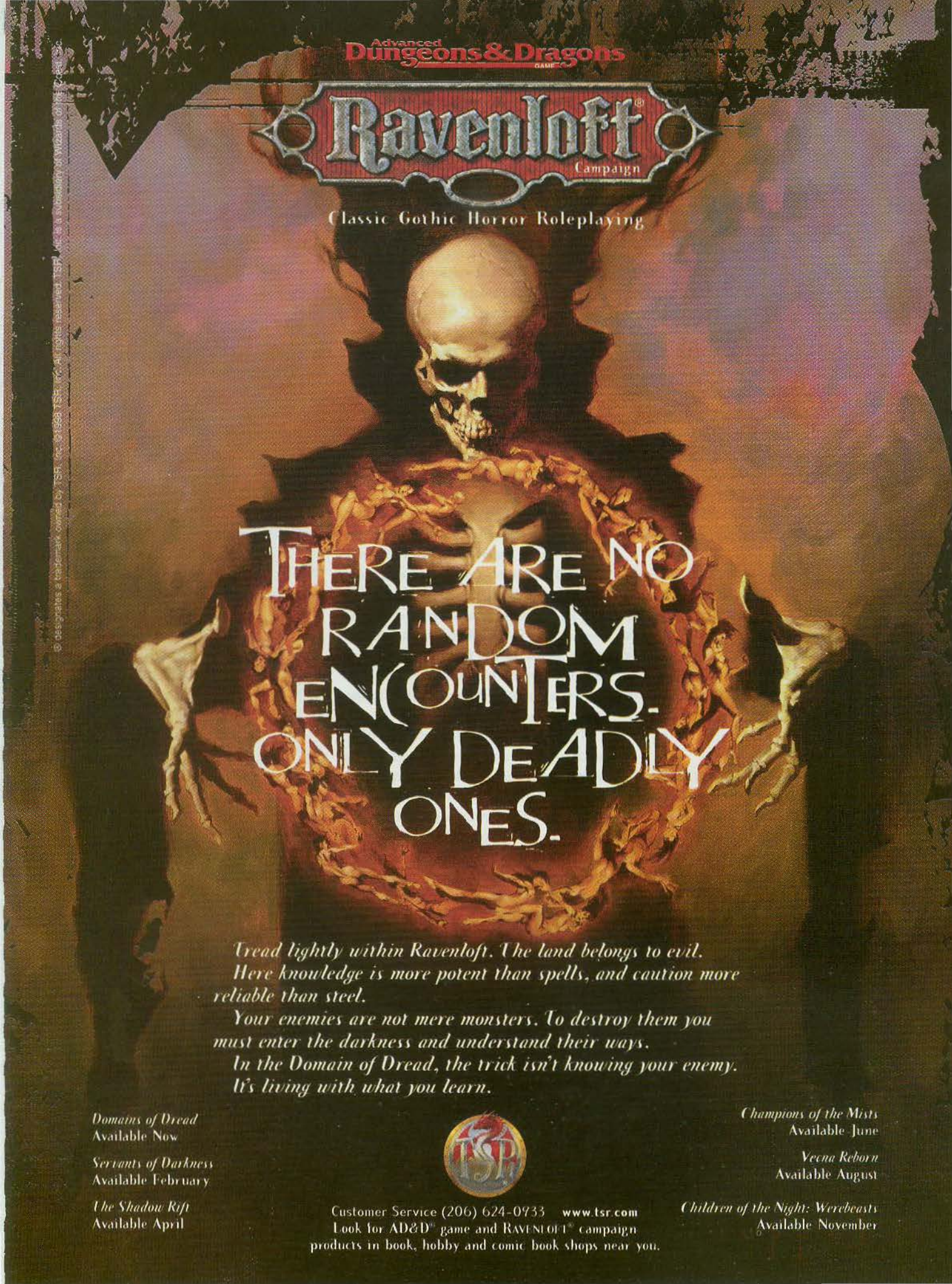
This is not a single item, but a whole class of canes, scepters, and staves returning to popularity with commoners and lords. When skillfully carved and inlaid with precious materials, the rods serve dual roles as symbols of authority and fashionable weapons when situations demand that one go otherwise unarmed (such as noble feasts). Many of Greyhawk City's Nightwatchmen have exchanged their cudgels for these.

Not a few have been found to contain cleverly concealed hollows for holding coin, gemstones, or parchment accessible only after twisting the shaft or depressing some secret catch (3 gp). The woodfolk of the Gnarley Forest employ a variety which casts a spray of fine, colored dust or flour. The dust reveals the presence of things invisible but does not stick to displaced or illusory creatures (5 gp).

Thin blades, of dagger or short sword length, have also appeared, bounded only by the imagination of the crafter and skill at hiding them (soldiers and sentries being a suspicious lot). One party-going Sea Prince noble is said to have defeated a privy-lurking assassin when the dorsal fins of his scepter, decorated in a leaping dolphin motif, sprang open creating a wickedly bladed mace. The finest artisans have been retained and stand ready to craft to your delight, though final value in coin may vary widely (17 gp).

Zilchus' Tradepriests are known to offer sale of staves whose heads can open to reveal magical light within (750 gp). Those of Fharlanghn's faithful are known for having "kindler" pouches hanging from their heads and for holding several glowing orbs used in their roles as guides and explorers (and sold when the need for funds arises). Staff alone, 9 gp.

The orbs are thumbnail-size spheres of crystal with multiple *continual light* spells cast upon them (increasing their perceived value as they are not, therefore, easily dispelled). Roll 2d4 to determine how many "layers" of *continual light* spells have been cast. All radiance ceases if a sphere or the head of a Zilchus staff is broken.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For Your Campaign

These goods can find their way into a campaign in many ways. For those who dislike the "they've always been there—you just never noticed" approach, here are a few suggestions that should prove applicable even to home-made worlds as well as offer up a handful of adventures.

The GREYHAWK Setting

Among Cariel Mansharn's first projects upon achieving Director positions within Greyhawk City's ruling Oligarchy and the Merchants and Traders Union was the launching of a long considered (but ever dismissed) trading company. The Pale Falcon Market Company displays banners and crests bearing the image of a falcon in flight, a gold orb clutched in one talon. Even in its fledgling days, it has seen success restoring long-haul commerce affected by the Wars, filling more than a few coffers in the process.

Trading routes are anchored around Master Anolk Hepsclen of Nyrond's Midmeadow, Macor's Oerth Emporium in Verbobonc, Lady Ageviin (the Duke's Lord) of Musk Evra on the Duchy of Ulek's border with Keoland, and newly forged relations with the Border Ethereal on the Kron Hills border with Celene.

The PLANESCAPE® Setting

Despite the presence of such brokers as the Planar Trade Consortium (or perhaps because of them) to ensure fair and open trade in Sigil and beyond, a cadre within the Indeps have struck upon the idea of establishing their own coster. Since arcane items lose some part of their potency when brought to the planes, this caravan group deals primarily in mundane goods nevertheless useful to planar folk.

Several clerics of Hermes figure prominently in the coster as caravan masters, but their greatest accomplishment has been convincing Tarholt (of Traban's Forge) to grace their ranks (if tentatively). Alternatively, should the GREYHAWK setting be important to your PLANESCAPE campaign, replace priests of Hermes with those of Celestian, who holds even greater significance among planewalkers. Their falcon-alighted symbol represents freedom, and an almost predatory watchfulness over trade as signified by the piece of jink carried.

At least one trading outpost must exist on the Astral, taking on business with Zess' Forge. Another is likely to soon take shape on The World Ash. Not surprisingly, a recent suggestion to make use of the Styx was rejected by Falcon high-ups. The Falcons have a particular interest in "freeing" Tradegate from the "black influence of the Consortium," as Tarholt would put it. They're willing to throw in with the Merkhants for now, though many're split over the Misers' devotion to wealth above fair trade.

The FORGOTTEN REALMS® Setting

With the formation of "Luruar," the North's newest kingdom, in 1369 DR, much talk has been made among certain resident merchants toward a trade cooperative. After considering prior competitions, this group found it only sensible to form a priakos intent on fairly representing all interests both across and beyond the realm. Some deliberation brought them to use of the falcon sigil, it being equally at home all across the North and for its aggressive hunting skills, in this case, for trade coin.

The Falcons can be found afield in each of the nine member settlements (Citadel Adbar, Citadel Felbarr, Deadsnows, Everlund, Jalanthar, Mithral Hall, Quaervarr, Silverymoon, and Sundabar), and have visions of trade as far north as Ten Towns and south to Secomber (and perhaps eventually on to Waterdeep). Rumors of these aspirations have already reached the ears of Thelve Baruinheld, who's presently considering how the Six Coffers will respond to the rivalry.

Noel writes not for himself but for others. This article is for Kimberly, who secretly likes merchants herself and remained ever confident he'd one day sneak something into the DRAGON Magazine *"accepted" pile.*

Falcon's Bazaar Price List

Clothing

Laceleather pantalons	
Small	6 gp
Large	10 gp
Talwuc	7 sp

Weapons

Angon	10 gp
Replacement haft	7 sp
Metal shod or buttcap	6 sp
Doublebow[§]	67 gp
Reedmace shafts	1 sp

Armor

Bracers (–1 to AC)	35 gp
Double mail (AC 4*)	255 gp
Internal harness	11 gp
Gorgetal (AC 8**)	5 gp
Gullet guardian (AC 8**)	30 gp
Padded leather (AC 8)	5 gp

Miscellaneous Equipment

Bronzewood portals	***
Charcloth tin	12 sp
Dagger sash	4 gp
Draw-mouth quiver	1 gp
Dwarven stone scroll	110 gp
Fineplate	***
Galda oil, pint	17 cp
Gnomish neckpurse	28 gp
Honey dust	37 sp
Ipp candle	9 sp
Jalzanda oil, gill	15 gp
Luminous paste	4 sp
Pace beads	27 cp
Rhizian shield harness	44 sp
Santal wood incense	3 gp
Santolin, sq. yd.	14 sp
Silver tissue, sq. yd.	21 gp
Tamal leaves	1 gp
Walking stick	***

* Double mail provides AC 3 vs. missile attacks.

** These items provide the listed AC under specific conditions; see item description.

*** See item description for prices.

§ The doublebow has statistics identical to the light crossbow except that it inflicts 2d6+2 hp damage and requires a full round to reload.

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Urban Pests

After the adventure, most heroes are glad to return to the safety of the city. That's *relative* safety, mind you.

by
Johnathan M. Richards

illustrated by
David Day

ADVENTURERS EXPECT DANGEROUS CONFRONTATIONS with wild and exotic creatures when they go adventuring—it comes with the territory. Between adventures, however, it's a different story. After the dungeon has been explored and looted, the PCs often head for the nearest town or city. There they can expect a decent meal and a clean bed, and they can go about the mundane chores of shopping for armor and weapons, purchasing a healing potion or two, selling or trading the treasures they unearthed on their latest adventure, and generally unwinding.

The last thing they expect is to come across a dangerous creature in the midst of the city. After all, a city is bustling with humanity; surely, if nothing else, there is safety in numbers, and no truly dangerous beast would dare enter a town of even modest size.

Not so. The cities and towns that make up the world are filled with all manner of dangerous and frightening creatures. One might come to expect monsters to dwell in the dark alleys and sewers of a major city, but there are also those that walk freely among the crowds in open daylight, unmolested and often unnoticed by those around them. These creatures are often not recognized for the dangers they represent, merely because they wear an inoffensive form. Nonetheless, while some of these urban pests are merely nuisances, others account for many a death in the cities they inhabit. Unfortunately, few of these deaths are attributed to them, as the general populace is unaware of the existence of many of the monsters detailed in the pages that follow. Many people find it difficult to believe that such harmless-looking creatures are capable of killing a human being.

Each of the following creatures are normally found in an urban setting. Some were specifically designed for such an environment, while others created a niche for themselves over the course of many years. Any of these monsters can be dropped into a city adventure, or even between adventures when the PCs expect it least. A truly unlucky PC might even find his stronghold infested with one of these urban pests.

Having never lived in a big city before, Johnathan Richards says "urban" has never applied to him. As for "pest"—no comment.

Acid Pigeon

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Temperate urban
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	Flock, among normal pigeons
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1–4 (among 6–10 normal pigeons)
ARMOR CLASS:	7
MOVEMENT:	1, Fl 30 (B)
HIT DICE:	1–4 hp
THAC0:	20
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Caustic droppings
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	S (1'–2' wingspan)
MORALE:	Average (8–10)
XP VALUE:	65

Acid pigeons are virtually indistinguishable from normal pigeons. It's their extremely powerful acids that separate them from their cousins. As a result, acid pigeons can digest just about anything. While they actually derive nourishment only from normal bird food (bugs and worms, the occasional tossed bit of bread from a friendly bird watcher), the birds are stupid enough to mistake the odd pebble, twig, or bit of glass as food and swallow it. This causes them no discomfort, as their powerful gastric juices break down the items quickly and efficiently.

Combat: Acid pigeons flee from those who come too close (unless they have food in hand) and attack only in defense of their roosts—which are usually made along rooftops or ledges high up on buildings. An attacking acid pigeon pecks with its beak for 1 hp damage.

Just because the birds aren't violent doesn't mean that they rarely cause damage to others. The acid in their bodies is so powerful that the birds' droppings are highly corrosive. Anyone hit by an acid pigeon's droppings feels a burning sensation; if not removed within one round, the caustic material causes 1d4 hp damage. Droppings can be easily scraped or washed off.

In addition, anyone cutting an acid pigeon with a piercing or slashing weapon causes the bird's acid to spray in all directions; everyone within a 5' radius of the bird must save vs. breath weapon or suffer 1d4 hp damage. A flying acid pigeon pierced by an arrow causes a spray of acid to fall down on those below it (10' radius). Acid pigeons themselves are immune to all forms of acid.

Contrary to many city-dwellers' beliefs, acid pigeons do not actively "aim" their droppings at anyone, as they lack the intelligence to do so.

Habitat/Society: Despite their magical nature, acid pigeons behave as if they were normal city pigeons and are almost always found among them. Because there are no distinctive markings on the birds, it is almost impossible to tell which pigeons are acidic in nature merely by observing them. Acid pigeons roost, flock, and even mate with normal pigeons. The offspring of acid pigeons and normal pigeons have about a 50% chance of inheriting the acid pigeon's caustic nature—the ratio of acid pigeons hasn't altered significantly in cities where the creatures are known to roost.

Ecology: Acid pigeons are more nuisance than threat to the inhabitants of the cities in which they live. Because their droppings take a minute or so to start eating into flesh, most people are able to get the stuff off of them before any real damage is done (not that this makes the victim feel any better about the pigeon's "gift"). However, the birds do have quite an effect on the architecture of the cities in which they dwell—many buildings have developed a "pockmarked" look as a result of heavy acid pigeon infestation, and several statues have had a few inches shaved off of their upper surfaces, courtesy of acid pigeon droppings.

To date, no really good use has been found for the acid pigeon. Their droppings dry up too fast to be stored and used later, and extracting the acid from the creature's stomach is a difficult process at best, considering killing the bird with a bludgeoning weapon in order to keep the acid intact. It is believed that the creature's abilities were bred into it (magical "assistance" is suspected), but what the hypothetical wizard was hoping to accomplish is anyone's guess. It's possible the acid pigeon might have been the result of an attempt at creating a renewable source of acid, but if such was the case, the results are generally believed not to have been worth it.

Piranha Ant

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Temperate urban
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Colony
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Average (8)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	See below
ARMOR CLASS:	10
MOVEMENT:	6
HIT DICE:	1 hp per 10 ants
THAC0:	Special
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	See below
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Surprise
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	See below
MORALE:	Fearless (20)
XP VALUE:	2,000 per swarm

At a mere inch in length, an individual piranha ant is easily dismissed as a harmless insect unworthy of notice. The danger lies not in the individual ant but in the swarm of thousands of the creatures, who fear no foe and can strip a man to his bones in a matter of minutes.

A piranha ant's head is disproportionately larger than that of other ant species. Its sharp mandibles are serrated. The creature is a dull gray or black in color, allowing it to easily blend in with stone, the dirt of the street, or the shadows.

Combat: Piranha ants are vicious in combat. They only strike unsuspecting opponents, often waiting until their prey is fast asleep before attacking. This guarantees at least one round of free attack due to surprise. When attacking, the entire colony swarms over the victim, each ant ripping off a hunk of flesh and moving on, making room for others of its kind to attack in turn. Combat with a piranha ant colony is therefore treated as if the victim were battling a single large creature.

Because of the vast number of attacks each round, piranha ants automatically strike their targets during each round of combat. The victim takes damage as follows: roll 1d4 and multiply the result by the victim's Armor Class. Piranha ants scout out their victims ahead of time and generally do not attack those who have an AC of 0 or less.

Each hit point of damage inflicted upon a piranha ant swarm kills 1d20 of the ants. However, due to the vast number of creatures making up the swarm (1d20 × 1,000), it is usually easier (not to mention safer) to flee from the swarm rather than to try to fight them.

Habitat/Society: Piranha ants live in a mobile colony, making temporary homes in large buildings. They are led by a slightly larger than normal queen in charge of egg production. There are several winged males (movement Fl 12, maneuverability class C) in each colony, but the vast majority are infertile female warriors. Together, the thousands of piranha ants making up a colony have a single collective consciousness. Each ant communicates instantly with the others of its colony, and the creatures coordinate attacks with ruthless efficiency.

Piranha ants are similar to the swarms of army ants in the jungle, but in many ways they're worse. Their collective intelligence allows them to plot action in advance. Piranha ants send out scouts to scour the city for likely targets; they prefer humans living alone. Once a likely target is found, the colony moves into the target building, often living between the walls or in unused basement or attic rooms, well out of sight. Scouts are sent throughout the building to keep an eye on the intended prey. When the time is right (usually after the victim has gone to bed for the night), the ants silently enter the victim's room and attack *en masse*. More often that not, the victim is slain before he knows what's going on. The ants pick the victim's body clean of flesh and leave as silently as they came.

In winter, piranha ants go to ground, holing up in some out of the way place. The queen lays eggs during the winter, which hatch by winter's end. After a brief larval stage, the pupae are sealed into cocoons from which they emerge by spring, ready to join the colony in swarm attacks.

Ecology: Piranha ants take care to leave no traces of their attacks behind. After an attack, usually only a skeleton remains of the ants' prey. Slain ants are themselves eaten by the surviving colony members; this not only makes use of a food source but also prevents anyone from finding the bodies and figuring out what caused the victim's death.

Piranha ants are at the top of the food chain. While many creatures eat individual ants, none attack the colony as a whole.

Polyroach

	Standard	Large	Huge	Giant
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any non-arctic	Any non-arctic	Any non-arctic	Any non-arctic
FREQUENCY:	Rare	Rare	Rare	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Colony	Colony	Colony	Colony
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night	Night	Night	Night
DIET:	Scavenger	Scavenger	Scavenger	Scavenger
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)	Animal (1)	Animal (1)	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1–200	1–10	1–4	1
ARMOR CLASS:	8	7	6	5
MOVEMENT:	9	12	15	18
HIT DICE:	1 hp	2	4	6
THAC0:	20	19	17	15
NO. OF ATTACKS:	Nil	1	1	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	Nil	1	1–4	1–6
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Disease	Disease	Disease	Disease
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil	Scatter	Scatter	Scatter
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	T (1")	T (18")	S (4')	M (8')
MORALE:	Unreliable (2)	Unsteady (5)	Average (8)	Steady (11)
XP VALUE:	7	65	175	420

Polyroaches are a magical breed of the common city cockroach able to merge into larger versions of themselves. Each individual polyroach is about an inch long, beetlelike in form with a light brown wing case covering its back, although the wings are vestigial and the creature is incapable of flight. Colonies of polyroaches can number as high as 200. Twenty polyroaches can pile together and merge their bodies, creating a large polyroach about 18" long. Fifty polyroaches merging together create a huge polyroach measuring 4' in length, while 200 polyroaches can polymorph into a giant polyroach a full 6' long. The transformation takes a full round, but reversion to individual, inch-long roaches is instantaneous.

Regardless of the size of the creature, a polyroach has poor eyesight and relies on its sensitive antennae. The antennae warn the creature of movement around it to a range of 120 feet and allow it to detect edible food (or at least what it considers to be food) within 60 feet. Polyroaches, like all true roaches, are very quick and can change speed and direction instantly.

Combat: Polyroaches in their standard forms do not attack creatures larger than themselves, thus no THAC0 or damage statistic are given. However, as they merge into larger forms, their mandibles grow stronger, and they can inflict serious damage. Still, polyroaches are primarily scavengers, preferring to eat whatever is already available rather than hunt down live prey, since that type of food has the irritating habit of trying to run away, or, even worse, fight back.

The bite of a polyroach has a 10% chance of spreading a disease similar to those caused by rats. However, a person needn't be bitten by a polyroach to catch the disease; merely having polyroaches infest a dwelling gives the inhabitants a 5% chance per week of becoming diseased.

If a polyroach of large size or bigger is hard-pressed in a fight, it scatters—that is, it immediately reforms its body into the many 1" sized roaches, and the smaller roaches scurry away in every possible direction. Every hit point of damage suffered by a bigger polyroach kills one of the standard-sized polyroaches, so when it reverts to the individuals, many of them drop to the floor, dead. If the polyroach's opponent was trying to kill it as a food source, it might be distracted by the dead roaches, allowing those who survived to get away.

Habitat/Society: Polyroaches are scavengers, eating just about anything they can find, including garbage, whitewash, and even the bindings on books. In their smaller sizes, they often infest inhabited buildings, scouring kitchens and storerooms for particles of food. They are almost universally abhorred, as most intelligent beings consider the creatures disgusting.

Polyroaches are active primarily at night, as they dislike bright lights. While light does not cause them pain, it does cause them to flee. They lair in dark places—basements, crawlspaces, garbage dumps, and the like. In their smaller forms, they often live between the walls of buildings. A single female can lay as many as 400 eggs, so ridding a dwelling of these pests is often a lengthy battle.

Ecology: Polyroaches, as scavengers, are at the bottom of the food chain. While not really formidable foes, the mere sight of a giant-sized cockroach sends many adventurers fleeing in the opposite direction.

To date, no magical use has been found for the polyroach. The creatures might be of interest to those wizards specializing in *polymorph*-related spells, to learn how the magical merging of multiple creatures is done so quickly and successfully.

Rat Burglar

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Leader of a rat pack
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Average (8–10)
TREASURE:	R (in 2–8 lairs throughout the city)
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil
NO. APPEARING:	1 (plus rat pack)
ARMOR CLASS:	7
MOVEMENT:	15, Climb 3
HIT DICE:	1
THAC0:	19
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Disease
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	T (1' long)
MORALE:	Unsteady (5–7)
XP VALUE:	120

Rat burglars are magically-enhanced rats, usually dirty gray or black, with beady red eyes. They appear to be no different from the ordinary black rat, but appearances are definitely deceiving. As the name suggests, rat burglars specialize in sneaking into dwellings and making off with small valuables, which they stash in hidden lairs. Their front paws are dextrous, allowing them to grasp items such as jewelry and loose gems or coins, and they can move as quickly on three legs with one front leg clasping loot as they can on all fours. They are fairly good climbers even without using their magical abilities.

Combat: Rat burglars disdain combat, preferring to stick to the shadows unseen, sending others out into battle if the need arises. When combat is necessary, a rat burglar bites for a single point of damage. As rat burglars are no more hygienic than ordinary rats, the bite carries a 5% chance of infecting the victim with a serious disease.

Rat burglars have a variety of magical abilities with which they avoid combat. Once per day they can cast a version of *charm monster* that affects only rats (including giant rats). These charmed allies are used to attack the rat burglar's enemies or to create a distraction during which the rat burglar escapes. The charm effect lasts for 12 hours. In addition, rat burglars can *spider climb* once per day. They understand and speak the Common tongue, and their ability to use *ventriloquism* twice/day often allows them to avoid trouble or lure intelligent enemies away. Occasionally, a rat burglar might use its *ventriloquism* to lure someone into an ambush, but generally the rat burglar shies away from direct confrontations.

Habitat/Society: Rat burglars spend much of their time with packs of ordinary and giant rats, often making their homes in the sewers or back alleys of large cities. However, they also duck out of "rat society" and go off on their own at frequent intervals. Every rat burglar keeps several individual lairs at various places throughout a city; this gives the creature several places in which to store his "loot." These lairs are seen as private property to the rat burglar, and he permits no other creatures to enter. Mating and child-rearing is done in areas inhabited by an entire pack of rats; the loot storage lairs are for the rat burglar alone, and he often spends many hours in one of his hidden dens, admiring his small cache of treasure.

Ecology: All rat burglars trace their lineage to Slinky, the black rat who served as a familiar to a dual-classed wizard/thief named Durgan Shadowspell. Durgan invested much of his time "upgrading" his beloved familiar with magical abilities, the better to serve him in his work—mainly, making off with other people's property. Slinky served admirably in this capacity, up until Durgan's death.

Finding himself on his own, Slinky reverted to form and found a mate in the sewers of the city in which he lived. He sired many offspring. About 5% of these had Slinky's magical abilities, and these he took aside, taught to speak, and trained in the arts of burglary. The tradition continues today, with rat burglars training their young and stashing away stolen valuables in numerous hiding places all through the city.

Because of their magical abilities, rat burglars make excellent familiars, especially to those wizards with a greedy nature. Several thieves' guilds have discovered rat burglar abilities, but so far all attempts to train them or keep them as pets have failed. Some thieves' guilds have therefore tried exterminating the creatures, because the guilds often get blamed for burglaries committed by the rats, and if they can't get the rat burglars "playing on their team" as it were, they'd just as soon not have the competition.

Stone Termite

	King	Queen	Soldier	Worker
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Temperate urban or subterranean			
FREQUENCY:	Rare	Rare	Rare	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Colony	Colony	Colony	Colony
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any	Any	Any	Any
DIET:	Stone	Stone	Stone	Stone
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)	Animal (1)	Animal (1)	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1	1	2–16	10–100
ARMOR CLASS:	3	6	2	3
MOVEMENT:	6	3	6	6
HIT DICE:	1–1	1	1–4 hp	1 hp
THAC0:	19	19	19	19
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1	1	1	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1–2	1–2	1–4	1
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil	Nil	Acid spray	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	T (1" long)	T (3" long)	T (1" long)	T (1" long)
MORALE:	Unreliable (4)	Unsteady (7)	Champion (16)	Elite (14)
XP VALUE:	35	35	65	15

Stone termites are a bane to castle-dwellers everywhere, greatly feared for the damage they can do to the mightiest of fortifications. Unlike their mundane, wood-eating counterparts, stone termites subsist solely on rocks and minerals.

Other than their size and coloration, stone termites look like normal termites. There are four types: the king, queen, soldier, and worker. Soldiers have disproportionately large heads equipped with sharp mandibles and are light gray. Workers are lighter (almost white in many cases), with smaller heads and pincers. The king and queen are darker, ranging from a charcoal gray to almost pure black. Physically, the king is built much like a worker, while the queen sports an enormous abdomen from which she lays her numerous eggs.

Combat: All stone termites bite in combat, although the damage inflicted varies among the different types. The soldiers cause the most damage (1–3 hp). In addition, soldiers can squirt a stream of acid from their mouths. This acid has a range of 10 feet and causes 1–2 hp damage. Workers also produce acid in their mouths but are unable to spit it at enemies (the 1 hp damage done by a worker's bite is a combination of sharp mandibles and acidic saliva, so half of all damage caused by worker stone termites should be considered acid damage. Kings and queens lack acid-generation abilities.

Combat with a stone termite colony is rare, for they do not prey upon other creatures (their diet is exclusively stone). Even "creatures" of stone, like galeb duhr or stone golems, seldom tempt a stone termite into attacking—being rather slow-moving creatures, the termites prefer a diet of unmoving stone. They defend themselves aggressively; worker and soldier stone termites often give their lives in the defense of the colony.

Habitat/Society: Stone termites are usually found underground, burrowing their nests into solid rock. They are a nuisance in castles and cities, where they eat stone foundations and buildings. An active colony can cause a stone building to collapse after several months. For each month after the first, the DM should roll a saving throw against "giant fist" for the building (see Table 52: Structural Saving Throws on page 76 of the *Dungeon Master® Guide*). This save is made at a cumulative –1 penalty to the die roll each month, so the first month no save is necessary, the second month the roll is made normally, the third month the roll is at –1, the fourth month at –2, and so on. Specific ramifications of a collapsing building are left for the DM to determine.

Like most insect colonies, stone termites are led by a queen. She is responsible for laying the eggs that hatch into the colony's next generation. The king, as the primary reproductive male (others are groomed into this role when the king dies) is also important; thus king and queen live in relative luxury.

Ecology: Stone termites are believed to be magically altered versions of the standard termite colony, specifically designed by wizards to be introduced into enemy fortifications. While this might have been a good idea at the time, the creatures have since spread to other areas and are considered terrible pests by most intelligent races. They are generally inedible, due mostly to the extreme hardness of their exoskeletons as a result of their diet of solid stone. Occasionally a colony of stone termites falls prey to osquips or other creatures able to eat and digest stone.

Stone termite exoskeletons, when ground into a fine powder, can be used to make the magical inks necessary to create scrolls of *protection from acid*, as well as those needed to inscribe the spells *Melf's acid arrow* and *stoneskin*.

Faces of Deception

Langdarma is a land where prayers are answered and sins forgiven, where life is simple and desires few, a distant vale where truth and myth are the same.

by
Troy Denning

illustrated by
Mike Vilardi

FOR A CENTURY OF CENTURIES, the valley has lain hidden deep in the Yehimal Mountains, a lost paradise concealed behind vast bulwarks of sky-scratching peaks and growling labyrinths of twining, endless ice. It is a place sought by the desperate and the damned, a place where cascades of beauty pour down mile-high cliffs.

This is Langdarma, the legendary valley of peace and beauty, birth-home to the Serene Abhirati, and the last bastion of worldly bliss. Located in the heart of the Yehimal Mountains of the enigmatic Utter East, it is known only to a few of Toril's Heartland sages.

The Serene Abhirati was born millennia ago, emerging fully grown from the roots of three mountains known as the Sisters of Serenity. She made her home in the valley of Langdarma and became the Mother of Peace and Beauty, spreading harmony over the Utter East. Although she was the first to leave when the Serene Ones departed, her presence left behind an aura that lingers to this day.

None knows what became of Abhirati. Some suggest she assumed the name Sharess and wandered the Planes. Others insist that she forgot her identity and became Sigil's ruler, the Lady of Pain. Whatever the case, she left behind an aasimon servant—a movanic deva called the Sannyasi—to keep her home safe. The Sannyasi has done his duty well, hiding Langdarma beneath one of the High Yehimals' immense glaciers and concealing the valley's entrances behind an ever-changing array of magical *gates*.

Despite the Sannyasi's efforts, a few Outsiders find their way into the valley each year. They are usually desperate men fleeing some unfortunate legacy or searching for some intangible treasure they cannot find in their own world.

Atreus Eleint is one such man, a young noble with no legacy but the bequest of his desperate mother's love: a hideously ugly face that disguised him from his family's killers. Atreus is aided by the ogre Yago, the same loyal Shieldbreaker bodyguard who saved his life as an infant, and by a wily Utter East native as untrustworthy as he is handsome, a groveling thief named Rishi Saubhari. To reach Langdarma, the trio need the help of Seema Indrani, a healer with a hundred secrets and one huge problem—a greedy barbazu slaver named Tarch.

If they can escape Tarch, Atreus and his companions could reach Langdarma—or they just might find something a little more important.

Troy Denning is is the author of Faces of Deception, Crucible: The Trial of Cyric the Mad, *and fourteen other fantasy novels.*

Atreus Eleint

10th-Level Human Warrior

Strength	18/91
Dexterity	17
Constitution	18
Intelligence	14
Wisdom	12
Charisma	12/0 (magically altered; see below)
AC	7 (5 against blunt or cutting weapons)
THAC0	11 (+2 bonus to melee and missile)
Hit Points	88
Alignment	Neutral good
Special Attacks	See below
Special Defenses	See below
Magic Resistance	15%
Size	6'4"

Weapon Proficiencies: Bastard sword (specialized), club (specialized), long bow, footman's flail, throwing axe.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Dancing (17), etiquette (12), hunting (11), navigation (12), ogre brawling (15). (Ogre brawling requires 2 warrior slots; Relevant Ability is Strength; Check Modifier is –3.) When not using a weapon to attack, a successful ogre brawling attempt allows the attacker to inflict 1d6 + Strength bonus damage or cause the defender to save vs. paralyzation to avoid being immobilized for one round).

Special Attacks: When rolling for surprise, Atreus's enemies suffer a –2 modifier due to his hideous visage. His *blessing ring* bestows a +1 magical bonus on any weapon he wields, and he receives a +5 Strength bonus to damage.

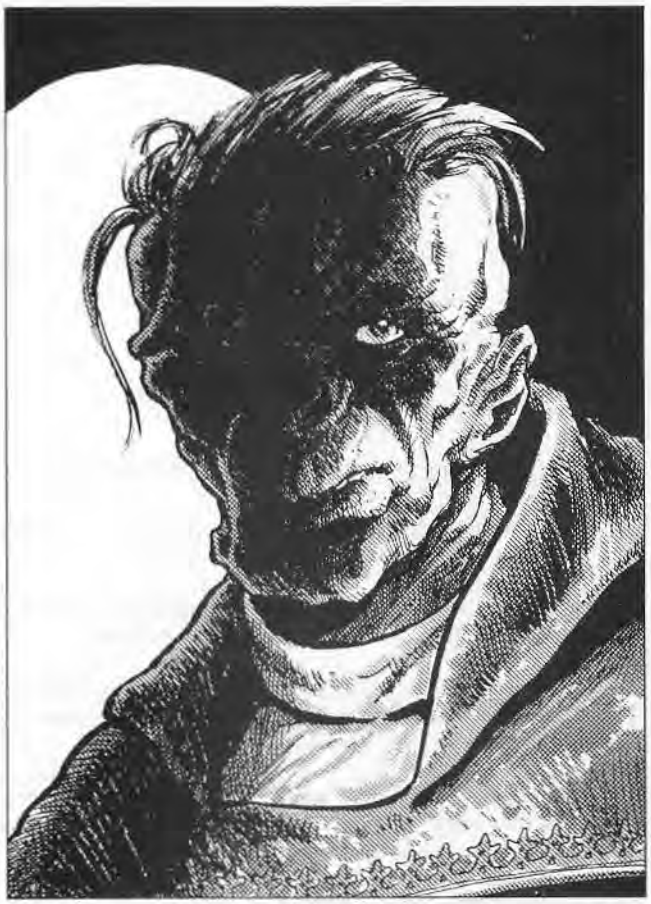
Special Defenses: A childhood filled with ogre pummelings left Atreus's body sheathed in scar tissue that acts like padded armor against blunt or cutting weapons (–2 to AC). His *blessing ring* provides a +1 saving throw bonus against *fear* effects. The same magic that made him ugly also bestowed magic resistance of 15%.

Appearance: Atreus is hideously ugly, with a gruesome face of imbalanced features and random swellings. His body is a jumble of powerful but misshapen parts, with pigeon toes, bowed legs, hunched shoulders, and a humped back. He customarily dresses in the finest fashions, favoring silk legs cannons and a velvet doublet beneath a cape of brocaded cashmere.

Background: Raised by the Shieldbreaker ogres of Rivenshield (in the High Peaks of Erlkazar), Atreus knows little of his ancestry. The ogres tell him his family perished while he was an infant, during the Ten Days of Eleint. He himself escaped death only because the family sorcerer disguised him as a baby ogre and entrusted him to his mother's loyal Shieldbreaker bodyguards. Unfortunately, the spell worked better than expected, altering his life essence so that he grew up to become the ugliest man in Faerûn (reducing his Charisma to 0 for those who only see him or who judge strictly by appearance).

Although the ogres have faithfully safeguarded the inheritance sent along by Atreus's mother, they claim to have forgotten her identity. Atreus suspects they have other reasons for withholding this knowledge, but he has never been able to persuade or trick them into admitting that they know her.

Atreus's one wish is to be handsome. He has sought help from mighty wizards, powerful clerics, theatrical makeup artists—even surgeons. Nothing has worked, for the sorcerer's spell is too deeply ingrained. In desperation, he has rented a villa in the nearby city of Duhlnarim and joined Sune Firehair's Church of Beauty, hoping that



the goddess will take pity on him. Perhaps she has. Recently, he received a vision promising to make him handsome—provided that he return with a vial of sparkling water from the Fountain of Infinite Grace, located in the hidden valley of Langdarma deep in the Utter East's Yehimal Mountains.

Equipment: Wealthy enough to buy anything he desires, Atreus has every sort of weapon, tool, and luxury item at his castle in Rivenshield. When traveling, he prefers to take along only those items certain to prove useful, relying upon an ample supply of gold (at least 10,000 gp) to fulfill any unexpected needs.

Magical Items: Typically, Atreus's weapons are at least +1 magic. He also keeps several suits of *armor +2* (in leather, chain, and plate) at his castle, along with a wide assortment of other miscellaneous magic items (roll once on each of the Magical Item subtables in Appendix 2 of the *DMG*). Due to unforeseen circumstances, however, he was able to take only two magical items on his journey into the Yehimal Mountains: a *blessing ring* (functions as a permanent *bless* spell) and a *coffer of safe custody that* can hold up to 200 lbs of coins. The coffer is trapped with the wizard spells *power word blind, explosive runes,* and *fire trap,* and it is magically sealed by a *wizard lock* (cast by a 16th-level wizard) only Atreus can bypass.

Roleplaying Notes: Anyone visiting Atreus's castle in Rivenshield finds it guarded at all times by a large company of loyal Shieldbreaker Ogres. The PCs may encounter Atreus himself anywhere in the Utter East, the Yehimal Mountains, or Erlkazar. With his fashionable dress and hideous visage, he may at first seem something of a fop, but nothing could be farther from the truth. He is perceptive, worldly, and shrewd. Although polite and well-mannered, he has the temper of an ogre and takes offense at having his appearance belittled.

Yago, Captain of the Shieldbreaker Guard (Ret.)

8TH-LEVEL OGRE WARRIOR

STRENGTH	19
DEXTERITY	15
CONSTITUTION	18
INTELLIGENCE	9
WISDOM	13
CHARISMA	7
AC	5 (unarmored)
THAC0	13 (+3 strength bonus to melee)
HIT POINTS	80
ALIGNMENT	Lawful neutral
SPECIAL ATTACKS	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE	Nil
SIZE	11'

Weapon Proficiencies: Club (specialized), two-handed sword, spear.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Etiquette (7), hunting (12), modern language—Common (9), ogre brawling (16), tracking (13).

Special Attacks: His *blessing ring* bestows a +1 magical bonus on any weapon he wields. He receives a +7 strength bonus to damage.

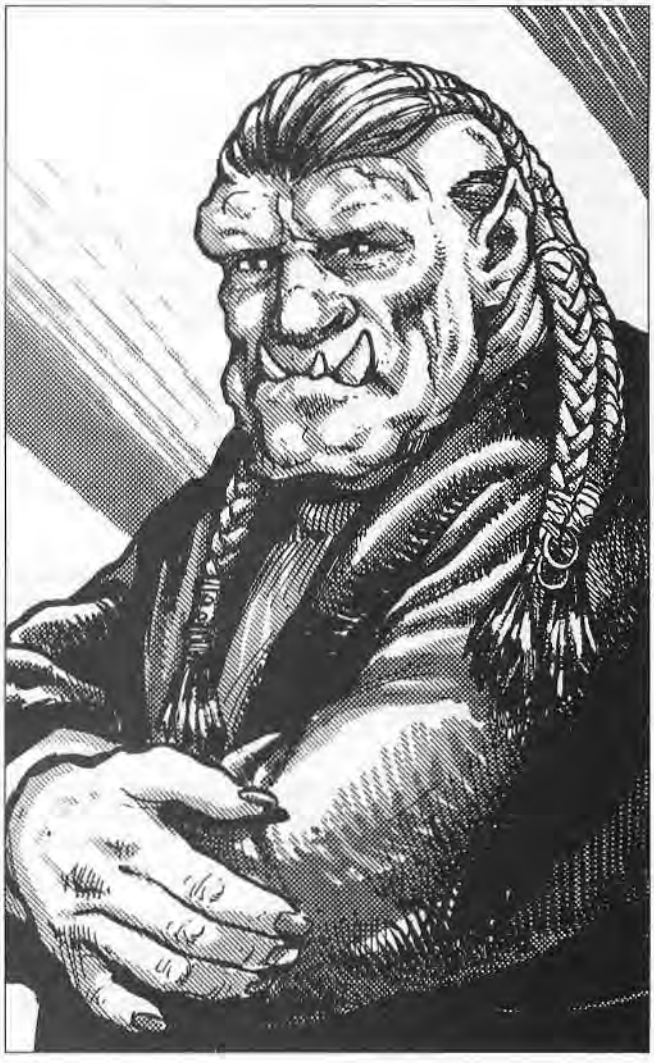
Special Defenses: His *blessing ring* provides a +1 saving throw bonus against *fear* effects. His thick ogre hide gives him a –4 AC adjustment in addition to his –1 Dexterity adjustment.

Appearance: At 11' tall and 450 lbs, Yago is a large but typical ogre with orange skin, gangling arms, and purple eyes with white pupils. A row of tusklike teeth protrudes from behind his lower lip, making him appear more fierce than he is. Like all Shieldbreakers, he takes pride in his appearance and avoids wearing rags or untanned hides. On important occasions, he wears his ceremonial bronze helmet and leather dress armor. Yago's age (80) shows in his graying hair and wrinkled face, but he remains hale, hardy, and ready for adventure.

Background: Like many young Rivenshield ogres, Yago aspired almost from birth to become one of the legendary Shieldbreaker Mercenaries. He spent his entire youth pummeling playmates into submission and became the group's uncontested leader by the time they reached "Age." Under his guidance, his gang completed the "Big Test" without losing a single life, and Yago was named "Sergeant of the Mob." After two years of intensive training, he and his fellows took the Never Vow: *Never act scared. Never lie. Never run away. Never disobey no human that pays you good money, and don't never ask him no stupid questions. Never change sides. Never ever get mad and kill your boss for giving you dumb orders.*

Yago and his squad spent the next forty years guarding castles, oppressing common folk, and fighting small nobility wars for a leading Tethyrian family. Yago eventually became Captain of the Ogre Guard, and it was to him that the Lady of the House entrusted Atreus (and his inheritance) during the Ten Days of Eleint.

Yago returned home with his charge, where he told everyone to call the infant by the name Atreus Eleint. Believing that all human infants need a good fortress in which to grow up, he used some of Atreus's inheritance to start building a great castle, which would not be ready to occupy for fifteen years. In the meantime, Yago raised his charge in good ogre fashion, ignoring Atreus whenever he cried, and turning him loose to play in the village streets as soon as he could walk. It did not take the ogre children long to notice that their playmate was both smaller and many times uglier than they were, and this occasioned many merciless beatings. Being the child's bodyguard as well as his parent, Yago was quick to crack a few skulls whenever it looked like his charge might get killed, and Atreus survived to become a tough and cunning adult fighter.



Whether Yago recalls Atreus's true family remains an open question; as of yet, the wily old ogre has not fallen prey to any of Atreus's attempts to trick the information out of him.

Equipment: Though Yago has free access to all of Atreus's things, he considers only a few items to be his own: his fieldpack (holds up to 500 lbs.), ceremonial armor (bronze helmet and padded leather armor), Club of Rank (oak club studded with steel nails) and oversized fighting weapons—two-handed sword (2d10 damage), spear (1d12 damage), and club (1d12). Due to unforeseen circumstances, he was unable to take any of these items into the Yehimal Mountains.

Magical Items: Yago wears a *blessing ring* (functions as a permanent *bless* spell), bought for him by Atreus.

Roleplaying Notes: The PCs always encounter Yago somewhere near Atreus. The ogre carries himself with pride, appearing clean and neatly dressed. Having lived in a noble family for forty years, he displays a surprising knowledge of formal etiquette, but he is not reluctant to express his impatience with "stupid human habits" that fail to get to the point. Like most ogres, he tends to respond to things he doesn't understand by smashing them.

Rishi Saubhari, the "Ginger Prince"

8TH-LEVEL HUMAN THIEF

STRENGTH	12
DEXTERITY	17
CONSTITUTION	14
INTELLIGENCE	15
WISDOM	8
CHARISMA	17
AC	7 (unarmored)
THAC0	17
HIT POINTS	32
ALIGNMENT	Chaotic evil
SPECIAL ATTACKS	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE	Nil
SIZE	5'7"

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, short sword, short bow.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Appraising (15), dancing (17), etiquette (17), forgery (16), gaming (17).

Special Attacks: Rishi carries a set of small daggers forged from the finest Shou steel and designed especially for throwing. Although these weapons are not magical, their superior balance and cutting edge allow them to function as *daggers +1*.

Special Defenses: Rishi's Dexterity gives him an AC Defensive Adjustment of –3 (accounted for in AC above).

Thieving Skills: Pick pockets 75%; open locks 67%; find/remove traps 55%; move silently 64%; hide in shadows 59%; hear noise 25%; climb walls 95%; read languages 40%.

Appearance: With a thin build, black hair, and golden skin, Rishi is clearly one of the Mar, a race of native humans who have inhabited the Utter East since time immemorial. Quite handsome by the standards of any race, he has a pearly smile and small, almost satyrlike ears. He cultivates a bearing more cultured and cosmopolitan than that of most Mar, and he prefers to dress in the tight trousers and snug tunics of the Ffolk rather than the more billowing fashions of his own people.

Background: Mar society is divided into two castes, tarok (low) and bahrana (high). Although Rishi was fathered by an important bahrana in the Free Cities of Parsanic (a Tariff Master in the port city of Tharkar), his mother was a lowly but beautiful serving maid in the great man's house, and he was born a tarok. By custom, the Tariff Master (Marud Saubhari) could have acknowledged his son and raised him as a bahrana, but Marud's wife was too angry about her husband's indiscretion and refused to have anything to do with the child. Consequently, Rishi grew up a virtual outcast in the Saubhari household, surrounded by the trappings of luxury and plenty but knowing such wealth was forever forbidden to him by his caste.

Rishi grew bitter and angry as he matured. Upon reaching adulthood, he attempted to flee with the Saubhari Mansion's greatest treasures. Unfortunately, Marud caught his son hauling a load out to the team of ox wagons and called for the guards. Rishi tried to silence him, and in the following struggle they knocked over a burning oil lamp. The house went up in flames, and most of the Saubhari household died in the fire. Afterwards, Rishi's mother was so horrified by the consequences of her son's actions that she refused to have anything to do with his stolen wealth and sent him away.

Claiming both the name and bahrana status of his dead father, Rishi became a terrible wastrel and spent his ill-gotten wealth in less than a year. After the money was gone, he began to drift from household to wealthy household, delighting his hosts with his charming manners and robbing them blind with his light touch. Despite his success as a con-artist and thief, he never has any money—perhaps because he spends even more profligately than he steals, wasting the proceeds of his rapacious adventures on ornate dress, sumptuous lodgings, and companions of questionable virtue. His reputation has recently begun to catch up to him, and he has been forced several times to take work as a scout for slaving expeditions from Konigheim.

Equipment: Typically, Rishi hides his thief's tools in a small pouch inside his tunic, and he is seldom far from his short sword and short bow. He carries 20 small throwing daggers (see Special Attacks above) sewn into holsters inside his cloak.

Roleplaying Notes: Rishi might be found anywhere in the Utter East or the wilds of the Yehimal Mountains. Always in need of money, he is equally alert to the possibilities of robbing strangers, swindling them, or joining them in pursuit of a quick profit. (In this case, PCs would be wise to keep a careful eye on the proceeds.) Once he identifies a mark, Rishi typically approaches with an offer of aid; his manner remains polite and servile even as he disappears with the treasure; should he meet his victims afterwards, he appears apologetic and contrite until he can escape again (preferably with the loot). In spite of his fawning manner, Rishi has a nasty temper. He does not hesitate to object to anything that threatens his financial interests, and any affront to his bahrana pride is met with bitter outrage.

Seema Indrani, Priestess of the Serene Abhirati

9th-Level Human Priest

Strength	14
Dexterity	16
Constitution	18
Intelligence	12
Wisdom	15
Charisma	18
AC	8 (unarmored)
THAC0	16
Hit Points	44
Alignment	Lawful good
Special Attacks	See below
Special Defenses	See below
Magic Resistance	Nil
Size	5'8"

Weapon Proficiencies: Net, quarterstaff.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Healing (13), herbalism (10), mountaineering, survival—mountain (12).

Special Attacks: Seema always attacks to subdue, and even then only to prevent someone from harming himself or others. Under no circumstances does she inflict wounding damage, even to save a life (her own or someone else's).

Special Defenses: As a resident of Langdarma, Seema radiates an intangible aura of serenity, which causes opponents to hesitate 1d6 segments each round before striking her and also raises their THAC0 by a +1 penalty. Should Seema ever attempt to inflict wounding damage, the aura vanishes instantly and permanently.

Spells: As a priestess of the Serene Abhirati, Seema can use only clerical spells that promote peace, beauty, and serenity. This gives her major access to the spheres of All, Charm, and Healing; and minor access to the sphere of Protection. Her spell progression is 6/5/3/2/1. Typically, she has the following spells: *command, purify food and drink, remove fear, cure light wounds* (×3); *enthrall, hold person, resist fire/resist cold, slow poison* (×2); *dispel magic, protection from fire, remove paralysis; cure serious wounds, neutralize poison; cure critical wounds.*

Appearance: Seema is a woman of great beauty, with vaguely oriental features that show a faint ancestral semblance to the Mar of the Utter East. Her face is round and gentle, with a small nose and eyes as deeply brown as mahogany. She wears her black hair twisted into silky braids and typically dresses in bright colors and many layers. Anyone meeting her for the first time notices a certain peacefulness in her bearing, which is a tangible manifestation of her aura of serenity.

Background: Kind, cheerful, and intelligent, Seema is beautiful in both mind and body. She was raised in the high Shang Po basin of Upper Langdarma, where an early inclination to care for injured birds and animals convinced the healer of a neighboring village to teach her his craft. She spent her youth studying herbs and anatomy, and when she reached adulthood, her mentor, Kumara, sent her to Lower Langdarma to finish her studies with the Sannyasi himself.

During her brief stay in the Sannyasi's palace, she fell in love with another initiate named Darshan, and together they conceived a child. Unfortunately, the Sannyasi cannot allow two healers to live in the same village, as he has the power to create only a handful of healers and must spread them over Langdarma as evenly as possible. He gave them a choice: they could live together in one village, and he would invest only one of them with Abhirati's magic; or they could live apart, and he would invest them both. Neither lover was willing to ask the other to forsake what they had both worked so hard for, so they each went to live at their homes in opposite ends of the valley.

A few months later, Seema sent word to Darshan that she had given birth to a boy. Knowing he would not see the boy for many years (healers are not permitted to leave their villages for more than a day), Darshan asked her to call the child Jalil, "light burning in my heart."

Equipment: Seema prefers to travel lightly, carrying only a woolen satchel stuffed with a wooden mixing bowl, an assortment of cloth bundles containing powdered healing herbs, and suturing supplies.

Magical Items: When mixed properly and blessed with a prayer to the Serene Abhirati, Seema's herbs can be used to heal and/or cure a wide variety of ailments.

Roleplaying Notes: Seema is encountered only in the highest altitudes and most remote valleys of the Yehimal Mountains, or in the hidden paradise of Langdarma itself. She avoids showing herself to strangers but comes to their aid if they appear lost or injured. She always gives new acquaintances the benefit of the doubt, treating them in a warm and friendly manner. She reacts in horror to any violence, leaving as soon as possible (providing that doing so does not place her companions in immediate danger).

Tarch, Barbazu Slaver

8TH-LEVEL BARBAZU WARRIOR

STRENGTH	18/00
DEXTERITY	16
CONSTITUTION	18
INTELLIGENCE	12
WISDOM	7
CHARISMA	7
AC	3
THAC0	13
HIT POINTS	46
ALIGNMENT	Lawful evil
SPECIAL ATTACKS	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE	30%
SIZE	6'

Weapon Proficiencies: Glaive (specialist), sword, light crossbow, whip (specialist).

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Hunting (6), mountaineering, set snares (15), tracking (7).

Special Attacks: Tarch has all the special attacks typical of a barbazu. He has a 10% cumulative chance per melee round of entering a battle frenzy, in which he attacks twice as many times per round as normal, receives a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls, and suffers a +3 penalty to his AC.

Tarch can attack once per round with a weapon (twice with specialist weapons), or twice with claws (1d2 damage each) and once with his wiry beard (1d8 damage). If both claws hit, the beard hits automatically, and the victim has a 25% chance of contracting a foul disease. If pressed from the flanks or rear, Tarch may lash out with his barbed tail, trying to trip his opponent; if the tail scores a successful hit, the victim must save vs. paralyzation or fall to the ground.

Although Tarch is skilled with the saw-toothed barbazu glaive (2d6 damage +2 hp bleeding damage per round until wound is bound), he rarely takes this deadly weapon slaving, as he tends to lose his temper and kill too much good stock. Once per day he may attempt to gate in 2–12 abishai (50% chance) or 1–6 additional barbazu, but Tarch is extremely reluctant to use this power, as it means splitting the profits from his slaving operations. (Barbazu and abishai are described in the "Baatezu" entry of the first PLANESCAPE® MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® Appendix.)

Tarch can use the following spell-like powers at will: *affect normal fires*, *fear* (by touch), and *produce flame*.

Special Defenses: Like all barbazu, Tarch can be hit only by a weapon with a magical bonus of +1 or better. His extra-planar origin gives him a magic resistance of 30%. Tarch's tail might come off if pulled sufficiently hard; this causes no damage, but he suffers a two-point penalty to both his Dexterity and AC (-2 and +2, respectively).

Appearance: With long claws and a slimy, slender torso covered in green scales, Tarch is vaguely reptilian in appearance. His head is pointed and narrow, with a bony brow ridge, beady black eyes, and a huge nose shaped vaguely like an arrowhead. His mouth is filled with jagged fangs, and his chin is covered by a long bristly beard teeming with maggots.

Background: Tarch is far more intelligent than the average barbazu. After fighting in the Blood War for more than three decades, he finally realized he was in a dead-end job and decided to strike out on his own. He resigned from his unit and found employment with a band of interplanetary slavers, then spent a few years learning the ropes. Once he had grown confident he could run the business himself, he killed the leader and took over as master. He proved too harsh a commander, however, and his yugoloth underlings soon mutinied. He stole the band's treasury (which he felt belonged to him by rights) and fled to Toril, where he established a base in Konigheim and began to specialize in a small but lucrative market for docile mountain Mar servants.

Equipment: Tarch travels with an armada of ten dugouts (each holding a pilot, two guards, and up to a dozen slaves) and a command barge (two oarsmen, 8–10 guards, and up to 40 slaves). The command barge carries an ample supply of chains and manacles, along with several sets of forge tools (hammers, anvil, bellows, etc.) used to secure the slaves in their bonds. Tarch and his henchmen (all 1st–3rd level warriors) commonly carry only whips and padded clubs on their persons, but they keep a sword and handaxe secured in a secret compartment in the bottom of each vessel.

Roleplaying Notes: Tarch can be found plying the secret waterways and caravan routes between Konigheim and the remote Yehimal Mountains, where he collects slaves for off-world markets in planes as diverse as Acheron, Baator, and Carceri. His interest in strangers is limited to their suitability as slaves, and he attempts to capture (either through force or deception) anyone who appears exceptionally strong, beautiful, or talented.

The Sannyasi, Warden of Langdarma

AASIMON—MOVANIC DEVA

STRENGTH	20
DEXTERITY	18
CONSTITUTION	18
INTELLIGENCE	18
WISDOM	19
CHARISMA	18
AC	–1
THAC0	13
HIT POINTS	64
ALIGNMENT	Lawful good
SPECIAL ATTACKS	See below, Fly 30 (B)
SPECIAL DEFENSES	See below, Fly 30 (B)
MAGIC RESISTANCE	40%
SIZE	6'

Weapon Proficiencies: Long sword, long bow (specialist).

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Ancient history (17), blind-fighting, charioteering (20), etiquette (18), healing (17), herbalism (16), languages—ancient (18), local history (18), musical instrument—harp (17), reading/writing (19), religion (19), singing (18), spellcraft (16), weather sense (18).

Special Attacks: As a movanic deva (see "Aasimon" in the first PLANESCAPE MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM appendix), the Sannyasi can use celestial reverence to emit a blinding flash of light that causes all mortals within sight to save vs. paralyzation. Characters of evil or neutral alignment who fail either flee in terror (fewer than 8 HD) or are too frightened to attack. Characters of good alignment who fail are struck by a strong protective love of the Sannyasi.

When threatened, the Sannyasi can send out a distress call, summoning 2d4 ki-rin and 1d6 metallic dragons to his aid. If forced into combat, the Sannyasi can instantly summon a *two-handed sword +1, flame tongue* to his hand and attack twice per round. By forfeiting an attack, he can automatically parry any single attack (even magical assaults that always hit) up to twice a round.

Special Defenses: The Sannyasi is immune to damage from nonmagical weapons and magical weapons of less than +2. He suffers half damage from dragon and magical fire, and no damage from cold, electrical, normal fire, gas, *magic missile*, petrification, and poison. (He suffers full damage from acid-based attacks.) He can automatically *detect evil* within a 100 feet of himself, identifying its source, direction, strength, and general nature. The Sannyasi's aura of serenity acts as a double strength *protection from evil*. In the unlikely event that he does suffer an injury, the Sannyasi regenerates 2 hit points per round.

Spells: The Sannyasi can use the following spell-like powers at will: *aid, anti-magic shell, augury, change self, comprehend languages, detect magic, infravision* (always active), *invisibility 10' radius, know alignment, light, polymorph self, protection from evil, protection from normal missiles, spell turning, remove curse, remove fear, read magic, teleport without error,* and *tongues*. He can also *cure disease* and *cure serious wounds* three times per day; *cure light wounds, detect lie, detect snares and pits,* and *dispel magic* seven times per day; and cast *heal* or use any spell from the Invocation/Evocation school once per day.

Appearance: The Sannyasi has the appearance of a slender, milky skinned man with cascading silver hair, piercing silver eyes, and a pair of huge white wings rising up behind his shoulders. He seldom wears more than a simple cotton sarong, and he speaks in a dulcet voice as pleasant as a lyre.

Background: When the Serene Abhirati, Mother of Peace and Beauty, departed Langdarma to journey through the heavens, she left the Sannyasi to watch over her home and its inhabitants, so that all would be the same when she returned as it was the day she left. For a hundred centuries now, the Sannyasi has done his duty well, using the powers she granted him to imbue a few worthy humans with the ability to call upon the magic of her lingering aura to cast spells of peace and harmony.

Equipment: The Sannyasi carries no equipment.

Magical Items: The Sannyasi can summon a *two-handed sword +1 flame tongue* to his hand at will.

Roleplaying Notes: Shortly after their presence becomes known, all strangers entering the hidden valley of Langdarma receive a visit from the Sannyasi. He demands to know how they entered the valley, what they want, and when they intend to leave. As long as the strangers intend no harm and are truthful in their answers (he uses his powers to check), they are welcome to stay for a short period—usually no longer than it takes to recuperate from the journey. All others are healed, resupplied, and immediately returned to far side of their entryway, which is then closed behind them. Should the Sannyasi be assaulted, he responds as peacefully as possible, using his powers to disarm his opponents and deflect their attacks, while at the same time gently but forcefully insisting that they stop attacking and leave Langdarma. He resorts to violence only to protect himself or Langdarma.

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